Wendell Berry's Sociological Imagination: Agrarian Values and Good Leadership in a Postmodern Culture

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Andrews University
School of Education

WENDELL BERRY'S SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION:
AGRARIAN VALUES AND GOOD LEADERSHIP
IN A POSTMODERN CULTURE

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Paul Alan Kaak
July 2005
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ABSTRACT

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by

Paul Alan Kaak

Chair: Erich W. Baumgartner
Problem

The question guiding my dissertation research was: In what ways do the writings of Wendell Berry, reflecting his sociological imagination, address and advance leadership theory with specific regard for the issue of agrarian values?

Method

I used the writings of Wendell Berry as a modified case study for my inductive, theoretical, exploratory research in a qualitative vein. As I reviewed his writings, I identified his moral ideology and extracted his value-set. Along the way, I observed Berry’s use of a method promoted by C. Wright Mills in his book *The Sociological Imagination* (1959). Since sociological imagination finds its use within the value
conflicts of social life, Berry's insights are instructive for those in business leadership. Such leaders face frequent value conflicts that have, for example, relational, economic, and moral implications. Furthermore, I have taken validation from the sociology of literature. Though not found in standard textbooks, the legitimacy of this approach is intact. I kept it in mind while studying Berry's writings. I also placed his work against the literature on leadership and business in order to challenge assumptions found there. Finally, my exploration took me into multi-disciplinary terrain. This required a method that combined intuitive reading with good record keeping in order to identify, consider, and confirm cross-disciplinary connections.

Conclusions

I synthesized a series of descriptive phrases for good leaders—those more committed to being virtuous than to being profitable. The good leader "gets it right," demonstrates "foresight," and sees society through the grid of the sociological imagination. The good leader understands a good economy is shaped primarily by the ideas of health and stewardship, not profit and exploitation. The good leader rethinks his/her values with a concern for a sustainable world. The good leader manages with care and honesty by walking farther into the places, communities, and sources of both nutrition and materials. The good leader equips workers to see the social milieu for what it is, empowers them for independent and interdependent work, and eagerly guides them in the way of moral virtue.
I dedicate this project to my good wife Kieva, who believed in “Berry’s values” before we knew who Wendell Berry was, who inspired and challenged me to choose this project when I casually mentioned it amidst my 103 other ideas, who longs to see our family develop a loving and healthy home economy (and who—with Wendell Berry—has energized me about that possibility!), and whose loving support (in ways both obvious and mysterious) has warmed my heart, strengthened my character, and clarified my resolve to be a good man, husband, dad . . . and a good leader.
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I am indebted to my friends and colleagues, nationally and internationally, who have walked with me over the last few years, enduring and eventually anticipating my “What would Wendell say?” question. Thanks to each one for putting up with my interest in provocative conversations. I have had many valuable and hopeful teammates,
partners, clients, and students. Working and learning and conspiring together for good has been mutually enriching and, hopefully, good for the world itself, too.

Don and Brad, I blame you for making the words on these pages *look* good and *sound* good. Much thanks for the time you gave, under pressure, to meet a huge need.

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Three final words of thanks are in order.

To Wendell Berry, I owe an immense personal debt. Though we have yet to meet, Mr. Berry, you have been one of the most important mentors in my life to date. You have shaken me out of the cultural matrix that has locked me into inadequate ways of thinking and living. You have reminded me about what is good. You have pointed me to the life, beauty, provision, health, and blessings that can be found outside, in Creation. I have found great pleasure in becoming familiar with your thoughts through your many writings and I have introduced many others to you through my work. I hope that what is found in these pages is honoring to you. That certainly has been my intention.

Elijah and Jeremiah, I love you so much. Daddy thinks you are the most amazing boys! As I write today, Elijah, you are almost 7, and Jeremiah, you are 3 ½. Never again
will you be twice and half each other’s age! It excites me to think how much you boys enjoy working in the garden, being active in nature, and—more than so many kids your age—saying “no” to the cries of the consumer culture. You are full of love and kindness for others, and your love for learning and making and sharing and helping is unique among 21st-century children. Which leads me to my most intimate and sincere words of thanks, to your mother.

Kieva, if there is any virtue in me, it is because you—as my wife—are more concerned about my character than you are about my contributions. Furthermore, your resonance with the writings of Wendell Berry did much to capture my own enthusiasm to carefully read what he had to say. You have given a lot of love and effort to the boys and me, especially in light of the challenges that come with writing a dissertation. They, and I, are thankful to you and we love you.

This has been a wonderful season of study. It has been good for my mind and heart. My hope now is that those who read what is here will grow and change. I pray that we will see a multiplication of good leaders to the 7th generation, and beyond!

Paul Kaak
Pomona, CA
June 12, 2005
Our 12th Wedding Anniversary
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Foreword

Around the year 1999, on a suggestion I detected in the writings of Eugene Peterson, I read a book called *Home Economics* by farmer-author Wendell Berry (1987). I was surprised at my enthusiasm towards Berry’s agriculturally based critique of American culture. Since then I have read all of Berry’s published essays, poems, novels, and short stories. Reading him both challenges and enriches me. In his gentle, yet forthright way, he has furnished my mind and heart with a unique sort of guidance that aids me in my role as a leader. Yet there is a problem that I (and others) face as we read Berry. His context—a family farm in rural Kentucky—is one most of us do not share. As I have read Berry’s corpus, I have found myself unsure how to “apply” the values he espouses so persuasively, such as the need for sustainable farming practices, humility in the face of nature’s mystery, field work as a pleasurable endeavor, a critique of the consumer culture, knowing when one has “enough,” the dangers of technology and machines, etc. What do I and other leaders “do” with this resonating, satisfying worldview when our context is urban and not rural, and when the material of our labor is information and not soil?
Eugene Peterson found in Berry’s writings on farming a metaphor for his work as a pastor. He says, “Whenever Berry writes the word farm, I substitute parish; the sentence works for me every time” (1992, p. 131). After describing Berry’s understanding of the farm as a small ecosystem, Peterson notes, “The parallel with my parish could not be more exact” (p. 133). He adds, “Wendell Berry has taught me a lot about topsoil. . . . Congregation is the topsoil in pastoral work” (p. 134). This use of Berry’s ideals to define good pastoral work has led me to wonder further if his works might be a field rich with leadership nutrients that would benefit those active in or aspiring to organizational leadership.

For this kind of guidance, the timing could not be better. More and more organizational critics are decrying this lack of holistic values in leaders and businesses and they are calling those in leadership to give an account. There is a recognition that leadership must be consciously concerned for more than its own stated ends. Alan Reder (1994) notes, “Whether they seek the mantle or not, business leaders are community leaders by definition, and therefore have a responsibility to the community that transcends ordinary citizenship” (pp. 178, 179). Earlier in his book he explains, “An all-encompassing notion, social responsibility refers to both the way a company conducts its internal operations, including the way it treats its work force, and its impact on the world around it” (p. 5). To this end, Wendell Berry’s insights can serve as an effective guide in this worthwhile cause.

**Background and Literature Review**

Four concepts have emerged in my thinking; now they need to converge in order to solve the problem that I will present and for my purposes to be achieved. Figure 1
illustrates the concepts of good leadership, Wendell Berry, the "sociological imagination," and values.

\[ \text{Wendell Berry} \]
\[ \text{Good Leadership} \]
\[ \text{Values} \]
\[ \text{The Sociological Imagination} \]

*Figure 1. Key dissertation concepts.*

**Values**

The study of values has developed within almost every discipline within the realms of arts, humanities, social sciences, and business. Personal values are usually discussed within the fields of philosophy (Chapman, 1993; Dewey, 1960; Fried, 1970), religion (Ramm, 1971), and psychology (Kohler, 1959; Maslow, 1959, 1969). Organizational consultant Stephen Covey (1998) and educational specialist Ted Ward (1989) address the significance of healthy family values. Corporate values are found in the field of business theory (Kuczynski & Kuczynski, 1995; O'Toole, 1995, 1996) and organizational sociology (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Schein, 1992). Cultural values are discussed by anthropologists (Geertz, 2000; Hofstede, 2001). Values are also a concern for political scientists (Harrison & Huntington, 2000; Peyrefitte, 1981) and economists (Harrison & Huntington, 2000; Robinson, 1962; Spengler & Allen, 1960). Sociologists also are known to show how values are developed within their schema (Parson & Shils,
1951; Taviss, 1972). Values also play into the development of educational theory (Frankena, 1965; Knight, 1998; Pazmino, 1988). Professors of Law, understandably, also have something to say about values (Fried, 1970). Even the field of linguistics is concerned with value systems (Hare, 1991; Stevenson, 1960). Research on values often takes the form of a dialogue between opposing ideals (Bender, 1989; Lappe, 1989; Markley & McCuan, 1996). Some scholars are known as “social critics” and they make it their work to critique the values of their culture. Neil Postman (1986, 1983, 1996), Dinesh D’Souza (2000), and Wendell Berry are social critics of Western culture.

In his 1988 article in which he reviews the concept of value in the 20th century, Abraham Edel (1988) observes that though it started from a “limited base,” it eventually “sought to unify” several disciplines. Yet each of these had their “own conceptual apparatus” (p. 12). Values eventually became a word that many could adopt.

It had appropriate generality, the appropriate openness, it could cover the appetitive and conative and desiderative and interest and—in short—preferential or selective tendencies of people in any field; it could capture habits of action and thought as well as moments of choice and decision. And it had just the right ambiguity to connote both a state of liking or prizing and criteria or evaluating. Values were the subject on which all the burgeoning inquiries now focused. Quite quickly, almost suddenly, it was respectable for American social science to deal with values as subject-matter. (p. 26)

But that does not mean there was agreement. When Ray Lepley (1949) published a collection of papers on values from a widely divergent group, he noted in his preface that there were practically as many definitions of values as there were participants in the inquiry. The result was not the commonality that he had hoped for, but rather, a means to promote multiple agendas.

The fact-value dichotomy has also been a point of divergence among those who discuss values (Kohler, 1938, 1959). Those who work in the physical sciences would
hope to maintain a hard line of separation between that which “is” and that which “ought” to be. Scientists were to be “value-neutral” in their investigations. So, for example, when an anthropologist such as Ruth Benedict brought biased statements to her study of the Kwakiutl culture, condemning their inclination toward “rivalry” (Benedict, 1959), controversy emerged (Edel, 1988). There were some academics, however, who found this form of analysis completely appropriate. They dispaired of both the possibilities and the advantages of seeking to be “value-free” (Gouldner, 1964; Mills, 1959).

One of the burdens in this dissertation is to provide a definition for the concept of values. In the next chapter, I will narrow the field and move toward a definition that takes into account individuals, societies, ethics, metaphysics, means, and ends.

Sociological Imagination

In 1959, C. Wright Mills published *The Sociological Imagination*. One of his last books, it served as the high point in his rise to controversy among his academic peers. It was not long after this that the FBI began to investigate Mills for his ties to Cuba and his critique of the American handling of the Cuban situation (Keen, 1999). Yet his book and the concept he describes impacted a generation as found in the *Port Huron Declaration* written by the Students for a Democratic Society (1962). In the years since, many sociologists have found the research philosophy he commends important and useful (Dandaneau, 2001; Giddens, 1987; Horowitz, 1965).

It was Mills’s (1959) contention that “neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both” (p. 3). He believed that the world needs people who can use information and “develop reason in order to
achieve lucid summations of what is going on in the world and of what may be happening” to individuals (p. 5). This he called “the sociological imagination” and in it he speaks of the difference between “troubles” that “occur with the character of the individual and within the range of his immediate relations with others” and “issues” that have to do with matters that transcend these local environments and of the individual and the range of his inner life. They have to do with the organization of many such milieu into the institutions of an historical society as a whole, with the ways in which various milieu overlap and interpenetrate to form the large structure of social and historical life. (p. 8)

Mills asks, “What are the major issues for publics and the key troubles of private individuals in our time?” (p. 11). He concludes that values and people’s perspective of them are the primary concern:

We must ask what values are cherished yet threatened, and what values are cherished and supported, by the characterizing trends of our period. . . . When people cherish some set of values and do not feel any threat to them, they experience well-being. When they cherish values but do feel them to be threatened, they experience a crisis—either as a personal trouble or a public issue. And if all their values seem involved, they feel the total threat of panic.

But suppose people are neither aware of any cherished values nor experience any threat? That is the experience of indifference, which, if it seems to involve all their values, becomes apathy. Suppose, finally, they are unaware of any cherished values, but still are very much aware of a threat? That is the experience of uneasiness, or anxiety, which, if it is total enough, becomes a deadly, unspecified malaise.

Ours is a time of uneasiness and indifference. . . . Instead of troubles, defined in terms of values and threats—there is often the mystery of vague uneasiness; instead of explicit issues there is often merely the beat feeling that all is somehow not right. (p. 11)

Other sociologists have adopted and adapted Mills’s idea. This includes Anthony Giddens (1987), Everett C. Hughes (Coser, 1994), Patricia Hill Collins (1999) (representing the tradition of Black feminism), Allen Guttmann (1984), Steve Dandaneau (2001), and Alvin Gouldner (1980). Naturally, these scholars apply the sociological imagination to their work as sociologists. But it also aptly describes what many of our
social critics use as well. This would include such people as Neil Postman, Dinesh D’Souza, and Wendell Berry. It was Mills’s contention that the sociological imagination is “our most needed quality of mind” (1959, p. 13). In this work I will also show its usefulness to leaders. And, while there are many connections between Mills and Berry, this is not a study on Mills. Free use of Mills’s concept will be made without the constraint of exhaustive accuracy or precise employment of his social theory at every point.

Wendell Berry

Wendell Berry is a farmer from Kentucky. His 70 years have brought him many blessings including Tanya, his wife of 48 years, his two children, Mary and Pryor Clifford, and his grandchildren. He has also been blessed to have lived and farmed on the same piece of land since 1965, land that adjoins land that his family has farmed for four generations. His 30+ books and writings dealing with agricultural and cultural issues certainly leave no question that Berry lives a full, disciplined, virtuous life. His books have struck a cord with many people. Philosopher and author Tom Morris (2001) says,

Read everything that Wendell Berry writes. I try to... Berry is a farmer and is one of the few people I think of as a prophetic genius. He is at times cantankerous and is more than a little down on aspects of the corporate world, but there is no better spokesman alive for the importance of community and a sense of place in our lives. ... There are few books that really captivate me, but Berry does it fairly consistently in his... Read... his... books if you get a chance. I promise you'll enjoy and learn. (¶ 35, 36)

Berry has been a prolific and award-winning writer since his own university days in the mid-50s. It was in the summer of 1957, shortly after his marriage to Tayna Amyx, that “served as the culmination of Berry’s literary apprenticeship period. He was determined to become a Kentucky writer, but he wanted to avoid the facile clichés and
stereotypes of southern literary regionalism. . . . Berry wanted to write the hard, unvarnished truth” (Angyal, 1995, pp. 12, 13). He consistently describes the same value-laden life through the three literary mediums of essay, poetry, and fictional prose. Berry’s own essay, “The Long-Legged House,” gives us a peek into his way of life in the late 1960s. From this way of life he appears never to have deviated (Berry, 2004a).

Berry receives comment and analysis from a variety of contexts, mostly in book reviews, but also in literary journals (Christensen, 2000; Fothergill, 1985; Knott, 1996; H. Taylor, 2001). He is also studied from the literary vein in dissertation work (Perkins, 2000; Schimmoeller, 1998) as well as published studies of his work (Angyal, 1995; Goodrich, 2001; Merchant, 1991; Roorda, 1998; Slovic, 1992). Berry has also been interviewed (Albacete, Perl, Lewis, & Berkman, 2000; Basney & Leax, 2000; Carraco, 1997; Fisher-Smith, 1993; Mangine, 1994) and analyzed (Deffenbaugh, 1996; Nibblelink, 1985; Snauwaert, 1990; Strawman, 1990) by those interested in issues of culture and agriculture.

Berry’s land ethic has been studied (Holden, 1998) and broadened in studies of his agrarian social philosophy (Richardson, 1997; K. K. Smith, 2003). There are some articles that look more closely at his particular way of life (Polsgrove & Sanders, 1990). He stands on the shoulders of the likes of Henry David Thoreau (1960), the Twelve Southerners (1962), and along side Aldo Leopold (1986), Rachel Carson (2002), and Barry Lopez (1989, 1998).

As a two-time English professor at the University of Kentucky, words, language, and writing are important to him (Berry, 1983) and his influences are many, including
poets William Carlos Williams, John Milton, as well as C.S. Lewis, William Blake, Edward Abbey, and the Bible to name a few.

Of himself, Berry says, “my work has been motivated by a desire to make myself responsibly at home in this world and in my native and chosen place” (Berry, 1987, back cover). His concerns are widespread. They include care for the land, poetry, marriage, economics, education, citizenship, health care, community, men and women, church, local history, and more. It is my contention in the pages that follow to suggest that he possesses a fairly comprehensive worldview that contains insights that ought to be heeded by those in places of leadership. This study, therefore, is restricted to the writings of one author, Wendell Berry. There are others who share his views (Donahue, 1999; Howard, 1952, 1972; Jackson, 1985; Jackson, Berry, & Colman, 1984; Logsdon, 1995, 2000; Strange, 1988; Wirzba, 2003) and they may be given confirmatory mention, but the focus will be on Berry’s lifelong corpus.

In transition to a few comments about good leadership, I should add here that Wendell Berry is not considered a scholar in the field of leadership, nor is that his intention. In fact, he seems more interested in challenging ordinary people to choose the way of personal responsibility in the face of an exploitive economy. In pursuing the stated purpose of this study, therefore, it is recognized that most of the work in deriving leadership insights will come from my own interpretive perspective.

Good Leadership

In this study, the particular concern is how the values that a leader holds or adopts affect the way that that leader carries out his or her role (Behr, 1998; Fairholm, 1991; Kuczmarski & Kuczmarski, 1995; Lord & Brown, 2001). The literature is definitely
mixed on this. Some come at this anthropologically and note the importance of leadership values for the culture of the organization itself (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Schein, 1992). Some see values improving both leaders and followers (Burns, 1978), while others see values as key for the well-being of the environment/culture outside the organization (Chappell, 1993, 1999; Cohen & Greenfield, 1997; Roddick, 1991). Most corporate leadership theory on values has a utilitarian emphasis (Blanchard & O'Connor, 1997; Kuczynski & Kuczynski, 1995), though an occasional author is concerned with the relationship between morality and character (O'Toole, 1995, 1996). Studies of business ethics are also helpful at this point (Ciulla, 2004; Dalla Costa, 1998; H. Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, & Damon, 2002), as are studies dealing with ethics and their socio-cultural impact (Crocker & Linden, 1997; Harrison, 2000; Harrison & Huntington, 2000; Jamieson, 2000; Ogletree, 2002; Weber, 2001). Some are critical of values inherent in corporate life itself, suggesting that the whole system needs an overhaul (Korten, 2000, 2001).

Right alongside the concern for values, this study is also focused on the topic of "good" leadership. But the word good can have multiple meanings (having to do with the sometimes unrelated issues of quality, effectiveness, and morality) which make it quite pregnant for debate in the world of postmodern academics (Ciulla, 1995; Clarke, 1999; Crocker & Linden, 1997). In the literature of philosophy, one use of the word good is to describe virtues ("excellences") that have inherently beneficial qualities (Aristotle, 1952; Frankena, 1973; Geisler & Feinberg, 1980). Sociologists such as Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swindler, & Tipton (1991) do not shy away from the use of the word good in their analysis of society. The good society is what O'Toole (1995) believes values-based
leaders help create. Two other authors speak of “good business” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003; Dalla Costa, 1998) and another of “good work” (H. Gardner et al., 2002).

Philosophically speaking, historic and contemporary studies on ethics (Aristotle, 1952; Ciulla, 1995; Frankena, 1973; Kant, 1952; Mill, 1952; Rawls, 1999), including virtue ethics (MacIntyre, 1981; R. Taylor, 1991), will help get at a view of what is “good” and the application of goodness to the character of the leader. The burden to carry here is to define good leadership and to show the importance of values—particularly agrarian values—in discussing how leaders lead.

The Problem Statement

Looking back at the components illustrated in Figure 1, the problem this dissertation intends to resolve begins to become evident in light of gaps and connections existing in the current literature.

![Figure 2. Exploring the gaps and connections in the main concepts of the dissertation.](image)

The idea of values is a concern in sociology in general and the sociological imagination in particular. However, due to the wide debate on the definitions of
"values," one that integrates a particular vision (or, image) of individual, organizational, social, and ecological well-being is needed. Most studies of any length on Berry acknowledge his values, specifically his "agrarian" values. And, while agrarian values have been discussed in some of the sociological literature (Dalecki & Coughenour, 1992; Singer & Freire de Sousa, 1983), his values in particular are not discussed in such studies and there is not any literature that acknowledges his sociological imagination.

But the largest gap and therefore the problem (illustrated by the arrows I have added to Figure 3) is to bring the idea of values—particularly Wendell Berry’s value system, linked with his use of the sociological imagination—into connection with “good leadership.”

As noted above, the literature contains definitions indicating some connections between leadership and values. But using the idea of “good” leadership, as I intend to here, will force me to provide clearer definitions and to be clearer about the connections. Since nothing could be found connecting either Wendell Berry or the concept of the
sociological imagination to good leadership, this study sought to make those connections. (By itself, even sociological theory on leadership is somewhat scant.)

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this dissertation, therefore, is to design a conversation between the business leaders/leadership theory and Berry through the frame of his sociological imagination. In the postmodern world, it is essential for leaders to develop a concern for foundational values and principles that account for more than just the organization’s bottom line. Failing to do so is likely to impact organizational health and longevity. For instance, Reder (1994) says, “The burgeoning social responsible behavior makes for good business” (p. 7). Roddick (1991) confidently notes, “And I think that by the year 2000 any company that does not operate like The Body Shop will have a hard time operating at all” (p. 27).

Such a failure in establishing core values may also negatively impact social and environmental health as well (even though such impact might not be intentional). Sociologist Robert Merton offers a set of terms that get at this reality. He speaks of “manifest” and “latent” functions. Manifest functions refer “to those objective consequences for a specified unit (person, subgroup, social or cultural system) which contribute to its adjustment or adaptation and were so intended” (Merton, 1999, p. 305). Latent functions refer “to unintended and unrecognized consequences of the same order” (p. 305). Berry talks frequently about new problems that are created by experts in an attempt to solve problems that they made!

Thus, every social group, such as an organization, is a system in and of itself. But it is also a system within the larger system of life on earth. Leaders of an organization
are to the larger society, as such, what their managers are to the organization itself. When managers lead their subdivisions on the basis of good values, the organization is healthy throughout. In the same way, those who lead organizations – which are essentially the “subdivisions” of the global societal system – contribute toward either cultural nurture or cultural exploitation.

This dissertation attempts to bring the farmer into conversation with leaders, and in particular those who lead in corporate, organizational, and business contexts. Specifically, I point out the “values gap” in studies of leadership and business theory and I bring Berry’s contribution to the table. Because Berry’s worldview incorporates a social vision that goes beyond customer satisfaction, monthly quotas, and shareholder value, he challenges both theoretical and more popular leadership publications regarding the nature of “good” leadership. With the sociological imagination serving as the lens, I carefully apply Berry’s agricultural insights (in both literal and metaphorical ways) to the task of leadership in order to bring greater breadth, depth, and dimension to how leaders view the application of values within their task.

As a farmer concerned with culture, Berry’s “outsider” perspective speaks with freshness and challenge to leaders in a postmodern world. This dissertation, therefore, serves a unique purpose in its contribution to theories of leadership and organizations. First of all, it addresses the inadequacies in these theories related to values in general and Berry’s agrarian values in particular. Identifying Berry’s manner of thinking as sociological builds a stronger bridge between that discipline and the practice of leadership. All this meets a need since postmodern culture is rejecting the tenets of modernism, which helped define the prevalent theories of leadership. This has further
importance since models of the good life, the common good, and good leadership are under contentious dispute in the contemporary world.

**Research Question**

The research question which informs this project is this: In what ways do the writings of Wendell Berry, reflecting his sociological imagination, address and advance leadership theory with specific regard for the issue of agrarian values?

**Significance/Importance**

The popular paradigms, training strategies, and typical goals and definitions of leadership need to be unsettled from time to time. This happened in the years following the publication of another book concerned about values: Robert K. Greenleaf’s 1977 book *Servant Leadership*. Leadership studies are due for another shake-up and perhaps new metaphors. Finding people who think independently of cultural paradigms and who speak with clarity into a particular topic or context can be difficult. Occasionally, it is an outsider to the discipline who brings the greatest insight. When such a person is found they are often described as “prophetic.” It is here (in the Western world) and now (in the era many are calling “postmodern”) that Wendell Berry can provide such a voice in the study of leadership. He has, in fact, received the designation “prophet” (Gilliam, 1990; Goodrich, 2001; Holden, 1998; Orr, 2003; P. Smith, 1987).

Most important, this study is significant for myself as a leader. It serves as an aid to me as a leadership consultant and mentor, and for others, like me, who are working with individuals in leadership positions.
This project is also important as a way to introduce Berry to many who might otherwise be unfamiliar with him. I would expect that many busy leaders would not be inclined to read essays, much less stories and poems by a farmer whose apparent focus is land and farm policy. In connecting Berry to the matter of leadership values, he can now be given a hearing among many who will be provoked deeply by his insights.

This study makes sociological and philosophical connections to the importance of values for leaders who would like to lead in a good and healthy way. It further extends the literature on leadership values by looking to a context typically not sought out for such studies: the farm and the farmer. Because Berry utilizes a sociological imagination and because his values find a different center than do those of typical professional leaders, he brings new perspectives to the existing literature. As an outsider to these fields, Berry’s voice provides much fodder for analysis and debate.

Finally, this dissertation should be a thought-provoking encouragement to young leaders who are laying a foundation for working and living with integrity. Berry challenges these leaders with values that could alter career, residential, and educational choices. But the primary significance is the way his thoughts contradict and even denounce the loud voice of the prevailing values in Western corporate culture. I expect that such awareness will prompt young leaders to rethink much of what they have been taught, both overtly and in the unspoken ethos of the contemporary world.

**Methodology**

This study was an inductive theoretical study. Theory evolved via the following four steps:
1. The writings of Wendell Berry were surveyed asking the question:

"According to Wendell Berry, what are the important values with which to furnish the leadership mind?" His writings were gleaned for direct statements, metaphors, biographical practices, and principles. Further, secondary writings about Berry were also evaluated. Many books, articles, and reviews have much to say about Berry and his ideas.

2. The literature of leadership and business was surveyed for issues related to the question, "According to the scholars of leadership, what are the important 'value furnishings' for the leader's mind?"

3. Berry was then brought into conversation with a number of leaders from various contexts. Specifically, I shaped a conversation between Berry and these leadership spokespersons and exemplars. The dialogue was framed with the question, "What would Wendell Berry and various scholars of leadership say at a 'leadership roundtable'?" and how would they respond to each other? The result, as will be seen, is some affirmation and agreement; some challenges and disagreement. There are also certain to be issues raised by the various representatives that Berry does not address and some new challenges from Berry that are not mentioned in the leadership literature.

4. This dissertation then seeks to answer the question, "So what?" Having noted the connections and disconnections that emerge, can a theoretical model for the development of values-based good leadership be shaped from the collected insights of Wendell Berry? If so, what would such a model look like? Are there connections to existing theory? What practices can be recommended to leaders applying these insights?
The foregoing method also provides the flow by which the chapters to follow are outlined. After a chapter providing more detail of the main themes in this study (chapter 2), I discuss Berry’s overall moral contribution (chapter 3) and an overview of Berry’s primary and secondary values (chapter 4). Chapter 5 surveys the literature in search of the numerous roles played by values in leadership and organizational contexts as well as what leaders can do with values from their unique position. Chapter 6 presents a dialogue between Berry and leadership spokespersons set in the form of a “Readers Theatre.” Chapter 7 provides a number of theoretical concepts for those interested in applying Berry’s insights to leadership. Chapter 8 brings concluding perspectives.

Summary

In this introductory chapter I have sought to begin my argument that Wendell Berry is a voice to be heard among those in positions of leadership. I have offered some background on my own interest in the topic and I provided a literature review on the major concepts that are being integrated in these pages. This review revealed a number of gaps in the literature. In particular, the problem being dealt with here is the need to bring the idea of values—particularly Wendell Berry’s agrarian value system, linked with his use of the sociological imagination—into connection with what I am calling “good leadership.” My purpose, then, is to craft a conversation, in various forms, between leadership theory and Berry. With the question, “In what ways do the writings of Wendell Berry, reflecting his sociological imagination, address and advance leadership theory with specific regard for the issue of agrarian values?” in mind, I described the inductive theoretical method I use for the study that follows.
Conclusion

My hope is that this dissertation results in an application of agrarian values to leaders in at least the following four ways: (a) that leaders will see that the land has value, the land *is* a value, (b) the leaders will realize that Berry’s agrarian values are applicable to them in the roles they play as leaders in business, (c) that Berry’s agrarian/sociological imagination will be instructive as an emulatable pattern for viewing social milieu, and (d) that agrarian metaphors might be found useful for the practice of good leadership. If through this introductory study, those called to leadership have the opportunity to reevaluate how postmodern culture defines the values and practices of the “good” leader, then I will feel successful and satisfied. And, to be sure, Wendell Berry’s wisdom will have been well stewarded.
CHAPTER 2

TAKING IT BIG WHILE THINKING LITTLE

In his classroom, C. Wright Mills was fond of saying, “Take it big!” (Judis, 2001, p. 80). This motto, fitting from a Texan, described both his approach to life and to research. In describing what Mills meant by “taking it big,” his friend Dan Wakefield (2001) said,

He wrote once that his aim was to “define and dramatize the essential characteristics of our age,” but I would argue that he went beyond that, in an effort to make it a better age and inspire generations to come. (p. 14)

Mills’s hope was to make sense of the broad social milieu and then to enter the fray, armed to make a difference.

One of Wendell Berry’s mottos is “Think little” (Berry, 1972). Berry is put off by global thinking, finding it futile in local contexts and perceiving that large solutions are usually accompanied by little effort. His hope is that people will look closely for the basic things they can do nearby, close to home. “In making things always bigger and more centralized, we make them both more vulnerable in themselves and more dangerous to everything else. Learn, therefore, to prefer small-scale elegance and generosity to large-scale greed, crudity, and glamour” (Berry, 1989a, p. 22). Ironically, little actions can inspire a ripple of improvement, even to future generations.
In this chapter, I offer small inspections of my overall topic. The big picture receives careful and detailed study in order to prepare us for the complexity to follow.

There is a crisis of values in this postmodern era (Anderson, 1990, 1995; Harvey, 1990; Norwine & Smith, 2000). Lack of clarity on what we believe to be good makes living the good life difficult. For some, actually, there is no confusion: the “good” life is the “do-as-I-please” life and so “good” turns out to be (what many of us call) “bad.”

Those in leadership must work even harder at the matter of values: how they live, what kind of purposes and practices they lead people into, their style of leadership—all of these are related to the question of values. Was there ever a day when citizens could look to their leaders in business, religion, government, community, and school and find moral coherence, mutual concern, and meaningful cause? In these days, at least, finding credible leaders with integrity and a consistent pattern of values is turning out to be quite difficult.

Even defining “values” is a complex endeavor these days. Jane Hammerslough (2001) unpacks part of the complexity when she says,

The word values comes from the Latin valere, meaning to be strong or to be worth. Modern definitions can include the material or monetary worth of something, the relative rank, importance or usefulness of something, or that which has intrinsic worth. As a verb, it can also mean “to estimate” or “appraise,” or “to esteem” or “find worthy.” A good value can be something that doesn’t cost too much for what it delivers or provides to its purchaser; it can also be something that’s a source of strength, purchasable or not. The many different definitions of “value” have increasingly become incorporated into consumption culture: a fairly low price and decent quality for an item are no longer the only standards of what makes for good “value.” The other sense of values—a source of strength or esteem—creeps into material objects as well. (p. 17)

Hammerslough’s (2001) comments are consistent with the temperament of contemporary culture, which she is critiquing. But her definition is still distant from the
insights of those in the behavioral sciences of anthropology, sociology, and psychology who have much to say about values. Philosophers and ethicists also have a developed understanding. So do business writers and leadership theorists who understand values in terms of organizational culture, motivation, and job satisfaction. Rokeach (2000) notes that

the value concept, perhaps more than any other in the social sciences, is meaningful at all levels of social analysis, and that a substantive interest in the antecedents and consequents of human values is not likely to be co-opted by any one discipline (p. 1).

What Are Values?

Clyde Kluckhohn (1961), former Professor of Anthropology at Harvard, says, “Values are abstract and perduring standards, which are held by an individual and/or a specified group to transcend the impulses of the moment and ephemeral situations” (p. 17). For him, values are “only those principles on the highest level of generality from which more specific norms and acts of valuation can be derived” and “a value is a selective orientation toward experience, implying deep commitment or repudiation, which influences the order of 'choices' between possible alternatives in action” (p. 18). For Kluckhohn, “a value or values restrain or canalize impulses in terms of what a group has defined as wider or more enduring goods” (p. 19). Florence Kluckhohn and F.L. Strodtebeck (1961) say that basic values are basic systems of meaning.

From the field of psychology, Robin M. Williams, Jr. (2000), believes that the core phenomenon of values “is the presence of criteria or standards of preference” (p. 16). Milton Rokeach (2000) defines values as “abstract ideals, positive or negative, not tied to any specific object or situation, representing a person’s beliefs about modes of conduct and ideal terminal goals” (p. 72).
Sociologist Talcott Parsons (1951) noted, “An element of a shared symbolic system which serves as a criterion or standard for selection among the alternatives of orientation which are intrinsically open in a situation may be called a values” (p. 12). It was Parsons’s belief that values are a significant part of the complexity of every social system. In *The Harper Collins Dictionary of Sociology*, Jary and Jary (1991) give two sociological uses of the word values: (a) ethical ideals and beliefs, and (b) the central beliefs and purposes of an individual or society (p. 543).

Williams affirms that “in the enormously complex universe of value phenomena, values are simultaneously components of psychological profess, of social interaction, and of cultural patterning and storage” (2000, p. 17). But there are additional value-related connections and intersections within other academic disciplines.

The philosophers also have a place for values within the sub-discipline of axiology that deals with the question “what is value?” Knight (1998) says “the question of values deals with notions of what a person or a society conceives of as being good or preferable” (p. 21). That may appear similar to other definitions. But axiology’s two branches of ethics and aesthetics draw out its distinction: ethics deals with the questions of goodness and badness in the area of moral conduct and aesthetics is concerned about how to evaluate beauty, especially in the realm of art (Knight, 1998). Virtues, which are sometimes equated with values, are not mere preferences, but rather, “dispositions or traits” that “must be acquired” (Frankena, 1973). Virtues (as opposed to “vices”) are considered morally good character qualities.

Organizational theorists Deal and Kennedy (1982) say that values are “the basic concepts and beliefs of an organization; as such they form the heart of the corporate
culture" and "define 'success' in concrete terms" (p. 14). Schein (1992) describes values as those espoused justifications that "become embodied in an ideology or organizational philosophy" and can then "serve as a guide and as a way of dealing with the uncertainty of intrinsically uncontrollable or difficult events" (p. 20).

All of this is useful for the creation of a useable taxonomy for values and value systems. But first we need to step side-ways and see how values fit into the larger conversation of worldview and its related components.

Values and Worldview

Worldview (Weltanschauung) has been variously defined according to the emphasis of various authors. Writers have discussed the concept, for example, from the perspective of religion (Burnett, 1995), philosophy (Sire, 1976), culture (Hiebert, 1985, 1994), civilization (Harrison & Huntington, 2000; Smart, 1999), and politics (Almond, Powell, Storm, & Dalton, 2003). For many theorists, their analysis of worldview inevitably includes more than one or even all of these areas. I define worldview as the complex and contextual interplay of beliefs, needs, and attitudes that shape a group’s understanding and expression of its functional, moral, and cultural norms (Fig. 4). A worldview is discovered, portrayed, transferred, and adjusted by persons of a collective society in a particular geographic place over time.

We can unpack an explanation of Figure 4 as follows:

1. Ontologically speaking, a worldview is built upon the seen and unseen reality experienced among a particular group of people. It necessarily takes into account (though sometimes unconsciously or unintentionally) both the physical (e.g., land,
Figure 4. A graphic representation illustrating how the elements of a worldview intersect and interact with each other.

people) and the metaphysical (e.g., God, spirits). It grows from the collective's experiences and interpretive musings regarding their life in their particular place.

2. From the group's social construction of local reality (Berger & Luckman, 1967) and "meaning-making" activities come the group's beliefs and needs. Beliefs are technically understood as *supposed interpretations of reality* and needs may be technically defined as "*a deprivation that energizes the drive to eliminate or reduce the deprivation*" (Halonene & Santrock, 1996). While beliefs are shaped and accepted by faith (or fear), needs are quickly realized and responded to for survival.
3. As beliefs and needs are internalized in persons and peoples they soon form an attitude of like or dislike about the meanings and action plans that have been discovered and/or made. In the generational transference of local beliefs and local needs, the transfer of the acceptable attitude occurs essentially at the same time.

4. An attitude toward a belief or need is then likely to have a strong link toward the development and practice of societal norms, which serve as the customary behaviors of the group. Positive attitudes will likely result in acquiescent or enthusiastic practice of a particular norm, and negative attitudes will probably result in an “anti-norm.” Norms take at least three forms: (a) the functional norms, which are the required but perhaps morally neutrally behaviors of a society such as eating; (b) virtues, which—in contrast to their antithesis, vices—are ideal moral norms; and (c) symbolic norms such as a wedding celebration or typical architecture for a home. The functional and moral are the non-material “system of customs” (practices and disciplines) of a social group while the symbolic norms are expressed in material, visual, often artistic ways. Values (❤️) emerge and live at the intersections of the elements of culture.

What, then, is “culture”? Someone has noted that culture is what the anthropologist sees as an outsider, studying a group of people while worldview is what the people themselves experience. Culture is the manifestations of the values embedded in a group of people. Grounded in the work of linguist Kenneth Pike (E. Pike, 1981), the “etic” perspective on culture is one of detached observation while “emic” considers “meaning” as embedded in a people’s own perspective on the workings of the world. Individuals within the group will probably have the same basic worldview as their
geographic-ethnic neighbors. But the local culture will always have shades of difference due to socialization, experiences, and intellectual influences.

A Definition for Values

Now let us return to my interdisciplinary definitions of values and integrate them with this larger understanding of worldview. A look at the components of these definitions reveals commonality among them, as well as some important differences. (See Table 1.) For the most part, the definitions are complementary. But there are some noteworthy distinctives:

1. Deal and Kennedy (1982) along with Schein (1992) have co-opted the concept of culture and applied it to organizations. That is not important to us now. It will be later.

2. Again it is Deal and Kennedy (1982) who deviate from the idea that values are “abstract” and “general” by saying that values define success in “concrete terms.”

3. Though rare, there are times when the kinds of standards, principles, etc., are defined. Kluckhohn (1961) speaks of “enduring goods” which seems to me to correlate with Jary and Jary’s “ethical ideals, beliefs, central beliefs” (1991, p. 543). Rokeach (2000) says they have to do with “modes of conduct” and “terminal goals,” the latter connecting with Jary and Jary’s “purposes” (1991, p. 543). Knight (1998) speaks of the “good” (p. 26).

4. Finally, descriptions of the usefulness of values are instructive. The authors suggest that values objectify and discipline our subjective impulses; they provide a framework for prioritization and choice; they give a moral orientation; they define success.
I can now offer a definition for values that connects our understanding of worldview and will serve us for the duration of this study. Values are the preferred
convictions of the valuable entities, practices, and ends of an individual and/or group in a particular place. Values are the reflective outworkings of what is good or important to a particular worldview. In this definition values are known, but may not be precisely defineable. They guide and discipline our behavioral choices, and result in a properly functioning society that is good and successful. Values, as I understand them, are necessarily moral. That is not to say that there will not be debate on the universality of certain moral principles—as the following pages will bear out—only that they are about what is understood as the good in seeking to live a good life and a good common life.

My definition distinguishes itself from the definitions quoted from the literature in the following ways: (a) values come from contemplation and are therefore convictions that are knowingly held (making them more than mere preferences, which in my understanding are what happens in the white spaces between attitudes and norms); (b) they inform all aspects of an individual’s life well-lived integrated with the shared life of a community’s that is well-formed; (c) they provide an evaluation of both means and ends, as well as anything that exists; and (d) they are morally centered.

Values can be quite elusive, however. Speaking of organizations (yet I think well applied to individuals) Schein (1992) says, “In analyzing values one must discriminate carefully between those that are congruent with underlying assumptions and those that are, in effect, either rationalizations or only aspirations for the future” (p. 21). He goes on, “Often such lists of values are not patterned, sometimes they are even mutually contradictory, and often they are inconsistent with observed behavior” (p. 21). This may also occur when there are massive cultural shifts with the resulting conflict of the values that have been and the values that are emerging. Norwine, Bruner, Ketcham, and Preda
(2000) describe this phenomena, even beyond the organization: “Postmodernity as an actual worldview is characterized, defined even, by contradictory impulses: today ultramodern, tomorrow antimodern; here postmaterialist, there supersubjective; somehow at once utopian (social perfection via education, tolerance and ‘diversity’) and anti-paradisical” (p. 23). This is the fray that today’s leaders live and work within.

History and Value-shifts

To describe values as the preferred convictions of the valuable entities, practices, and ends of an individual and/or group in a particular place is to describe what is lived out at least minimally in every existing society. Were it not happening, the society would implode. However, as I have begun to note, societies are also vulnerable, particularly in the realm of values. The global, industrial, urbanized, postmodern world in which we live here in the West is a threat to the traditional worldview at any point, be it beliefs, needs, attitudes, or norms and, therefore, values as well. Historically, some of the mechanisms that have destabilized the worldview of an existing society’s prevailing worldview are war, a broken economy, social movements (such as the civil rights movement here in America), and new technological innovations. But I would like to go back further and review the evolution of values through the premodern, modern, and postmodern eras. Table 2 presents an overview of these three eras.

In just 300 years of human history (that is just 14 generations as per Strauss and Howe, 1997), beliefs, attitudes, and values have changed dramatically. This is not to say that there was not or is not overlap. For example, manual labor exists through all the ages; there were certainly significant changes in both the premodern and postmodern
Table 2

*An Historic Overview of Values in Premodern, Modern, and Postmodern Times*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Premodern Times</th>
<th>Modern Times</th>
<th>Postmodern Times</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reality is permanent</td>
<td>Reality is many</td>
<td>Reality is created</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is one truth, given by local authorities</td>
<td>There are many versions of the truth and they are vying for preeminence</td>
<td>The many truths are to be tolerated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political options are one</td>
<td>Political options are at ends of an ideological spectrum</td>
<td>Political options are ideological hybrids</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity is found in social role and class</td>
<td>Identity is personal and individualized</td>
<td>Identity is always shifting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge is for day-to-day functioning</td>
<td>Knowledge is for making progress toward a better world</td>
<td>Knowledge is suspect and potentially abusive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge is received through generational transmission</td>
<td>Knowledge is received through science and one's preferred meta-narrative</td>
<td>Knowledge is infinite coming from endless sources and viewpoints</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The economic system is based on subsistence</td>
<td>The economic system is based on the manufacture of goods</td>
<td>The economic system is built on knowledge and service</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship are linked to local life, kinship, place</td>
<td>Relationships are broken-down and disembedded from local connections</td>
<td>&quot;Virtual&quot; relationships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mystery</td>
<td>Certainty</td>
<td>Relativity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theism/Paganism</td>
<td>Deism</td>
<td>Multitheistic Paganism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manual labor</td>
<td>Scientific Research; &quot;Fordism&quot;</td>
<td>Virtual work; Flexible accumulation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm</td>
<td>Factory</td>
<td>Computer network</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things change slowly</td>
<td>Big changes</td>
<td>Many big and rapid changes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time is linked to place</td>
<td>Time is based on clocks</td>
<td>Time relative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Territories/countryside</td>
<td>Nation-states</td>
<td>Global cities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunting and agriculture</td>
<td>Industrial division of labor</td>
<td>Knowledge and information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use resources</td>
<td>Exploit resources</td>
<td>Consume/throw-away resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversation</td>
<td>Books</td>
<td>Multimedia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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eras; local knowledge continues to be passed on (to some extent) from generation to
generation.

What, then, were the major "discontinuities" separating modern social institutions
from traditional social orders? Giddens (1990) suggests three: (a) the sheer pace of
change; (b) the scope of change (due to global interconnectedness); and (c) the nature of
modern institutions (including "the political system of the nation-state, the wholesale
dependence of production upon inanimate power sources, or the thoroughgoing
commodification of products and wage labour" [p. 6]). On the transition from modernity
to postmodernity, Giddens says, "Rather than entering a period of post-modernity, we are
moving into one in which the consequences of modernity are becoming more radicalised
and universalised than before" (p. 3). Giddens is not alone in this opinion (Harvey, 1990;
Jencks, 1995).

When Values Are Threatened

Emile Durkheim, one of the forefathers of sociology as a discipline, coined the
word "anomie" to describe

the state of mind of one who has been pulled up from his moral roots, who has no
longer any standards but only disconnected urges, who has no longer any sense of
continuity, of folk, of obligation. The anomie man has become spiritually sterile,
responsive only to himself, responsible to no one. He derides the values of other
men. His only faith is the philosophy of denial. He lives on the thin line of sensation
between no future and no past. (Maclver, 1957, p. 219)

This defines our contemporary world. Psychologist Kenneth Gergen looks at this state of
things through the postmodern lens where an

individual is a member of many communities and networks, a participant in many
discourses, an audience to messages from everybody and everywhere—messages that
present conflicting ideals and norms and images of the world. Gergen believes that
this condition (he calls it *multiphrenia*) is the major psychological problem of our
time. (Anderson, 1995, p. 9)

Walter Truett Anderson (1990) says, “We don’t know how to live in a world of socially
constructed realities” (p. 4), and “the collapse of old ways of belief and the coming into
being of a new worldview threaten all existing constructions of reality and all power
structures attached to them. . . . People can literally cease to know who they are” (pp. 26,
27), and “being a multimodal person and a moral one is never easy, even in a society that
has one official version of what constitutes goodness. . . . The more value systems
available to us, and the more complex our ideas about goodness—the harder it gets. You
don’t get to be good for everybody” (p. 152). This means that we are suspicious most of
the time, but especially when someone comes along as an “expert” with “the” answer to
our problem.

But this is not the first time Western culture has gone through this sense of
disorientation.

**Modern Values**

Modernism raged out from premodernism with a resounding sense of human self-
confidence. Whatever chaos various socio-geographic people felt in the late premodern
era, when they discovered social difference (i.e., culture), the early modern man had also
discovered the possibility of order, unity, and empirical truth. Using a clearly delineated
scientific “method,” the individual could (and expectedly would) find his way to a
common ontology. How ironic, actually, that from its earliest days, the modern ideas of
individualism and rationalism were planting the seeds of postmodern relativism.
The European university and, later, the factory of Henry Ford became the most visible expressions of the modern value-system. Work functions were divided and academic subjects specialized. The connections between leaders and workers became bureaucratized and the confidence of ordinary people that they could "know" anything was minimized due to an increased esteem for the "professional intellectual." Both factory and school extracted people from subjective experience in the world of nature and relationships and in doing so objectified knowledge and lifted high the value of quantification. And so, the modern values of efficiency, specialization, professionalization, rationalization, authority built on hierarchy, and limitlessness emerged.

It should be noted that modernism led to the greatest period of discovery and technological innovation ever recorded in history. The progress of knowledge and its application has been significant. And yet, notes Giddens (1990), "modernity . . . is a double-edged phenomenon" (p. 7). It has "created vastly greater opportunities for human beings to enjoy a secure and rewarding existence than any type of pre-modern system. But modernity also has a somber side, which has become very apparent in the present century" (p. 7). He describes Marx, Durkheim, and Weber as mostly enthusiastic about modernism, Weber being the most pessimistic. But then he says,

all three authors saw that modern industrial work had degrading consequences, subjecting many human beings to the discipline of dull, repetitive labor. But it was not foreseen that the furthering of the "forces of production" would have large-scale destructive potential in relation to the material environment. (pp. 7, 8)
Postmodern Values

As already noted, the postmodern era is bringing another disorienting transition to the march of history. Pauline Marie Rosenau (1992) sums up postmodernism’s reaction to modernism:

Postmodernists criticize all that modernity has engendered: the accumulated experience of Western civilization, industrialization, urbanization, advanced technology, the nation state, life in the “fast lane.” They challenge modern priorities: career, office, individual responsibility, bureaucracy, liberal democracy, tolerance, humanism, egalitarianism, detached experiment, evaluative criteria, neutral procedures, impersonal rules and rationality (Jacquard 1978; Vattimo 1988). The post-modernist concludes that there is reason to distrust modernity’s moral claims, traditional institutions, and “deep interpretations” (Ashley 1987: 411). They argue that modernity is no longer a force for liberation; it is rather a source of subjugation, oppression, and repression. (pp. 5, 6)

As David Harvey (1990) observes the condition of postmodernity, he is noticing “signs and tokens of radical change. . . . Yet,” he says, “we still live, in the West, in a society where production for profit remains the basic organizing principle of economic life” (p. 121). He also notes that several commentators have attributed the political success of neo-conservatism to a general shift from the collective norms and values, that were hegemonic at least in working-class organizations and other social movements of the 1950s and 1960s, toward a much more competitive individualism as the central value in an entrepreneurial culture that has penetrated many walks of life. (p. 171)

Harvey suggests that the primary effect of commodity production “has been to emphasize the values and virtues of instantaneity (instant and fast foods, meals, and other satisfactions) and disposability (cups, plates, cutlery, packaging, napkins, clothing, etc.)” (p. 286). Harvey says that when Alvin Toffler described the “throwaway” society in 1970 “it meant more than just throwing away produced goods (creating a monumental waste-disposal problem), but also being able to throw away values, lifestyles, stable
relationships, and attachments to things, buildings, places, people, and received ways of
doing and being” (Harvey, p. 286). Harvey offers a final shift in the modern/postmodern
transition as a move “from ethics to aesthetics as its dominant value system” (p. 336).
Anderson (1995) says it this way, “Postmodern thought focuses on the surface, with a
refined sensibility to what appears, a differentiation of what is perceived. . . . The image,
the appearance is everything; the appearance has become the essence” (p. 24).

Agrarian Values in a Postmodern Era?

There is a set of historic values that America has left behind in the modern-
postmodern transition. I speak of “agrarian values.” While some might want to make an
immediate correlation to pre-modern values, the correspondence is not perfect. To
discuss them, I review some history, mention some current spokespersons, and review
agrarian values as contrasted with “industrial” values.

History of Agrarianism

In American history, Thomas Jefferson gets credit for crafting a social vision that
described “those who labor in the earth” as “the chosen people of God” and the nation’s
“most valuable citizens” (Edwards, 1976). For him, farm life was about two things that
would affect both individual and nation: economics, in which the farmer and nation
avoid external dependence; and virtue, since farm life incorporates the disciplines of
industry, humility, and frugality (K. K. Smith, 2003, p. 21). Jefferson says,

Corruption of morals in the mass of cultivators is a phenomenon of which no age nor
nation has furnished an example. It is the mark set on those, who, not looking up to
heaven, to their own soil and industry, as does the husbandman, for their subservience
and venality, suffocates the germ of virtue, and prepares fit tools for the designs of
ambition. (as cited in Edwards, 1976, p. 23)
Meanwhile, in England, Ned Ludd led a collective uprising among textile workers that is remembered today, mostly in the cynical label “Luddism.” The Luddites were workers who smashed machinery in their factories. The two most common theories as to why they did this are “because [the new machinery] was so efficient that it threatened to take over many jobs” and that, due to hard times (low wages, hunger, misery),

the Luddites had to get across the message that they needed higher wages, and they had to give employers some reason to grant them. . . . The machines were a relatively safe and available target, and attacks on them were not crazy orgies of anger but logical and rational actions. (Stark, 1987, p. 558)

Luddism, and now, Neo-Luddism, has become a symbol for those who adhere to old ways and resist the “new-and-improved” technologies in recognition of technology’s impact on cultural and moral values (Postman, 1993; Sale, 1995).

In the late 1800s, following the Civil War, an agrarian revolt bubbled to the surface. What eventually become known as Populism was rooted in changes that began in the economics, commerce, and new political ethos of American life. It led to the loss of land and livelihood for many farmers and simultaneously a social movement emerged. Leaders, alliances, education, publications, political platforms, rallies, all emerged in a fairly short period with what amounted to be a national call to stay the hand of industrial progress and hold tight to America’s agricultural heritage. But due to lack of coherent vision among spokesmen and leaders, external economic and political pressure, and the tantalizing call of industrial progress, the movement all but ended before the turn of the century (Goodwyn, 1978). (Note that the 1880s version of Populism is in no way connected nor anything akin to the hate group known as the new Populist Party led by Willis Carto.)
In 1930, “Twelve Southerners” (1962) published a book called *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition*. The authors, all with connections to Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, “saw in the history of their own section the image of a region which had clearly resisted the domination of the machine, persisting in its agricultural ways, even after military defeat [the Civil War], well into the present [early 19th] century, and only now beginning to capitulate fully to the demands of American industrial society” (p. viii). The authors each contribute an article based on an agreed upon statement of principles found in the Introduction. Their book was reissued in 1962 when the South had “thrown its lot squarely with the machines and factories; agrarianism as a general pattern of life had become ‘largely a dead letter’” (p. x). (For more current perspectives on the Twelve Southerners and their ideas, see Havard and Sullivan, [1982], and Malvasi, [1997].) *I'll Take My Stand* has continuing influence and perpetual relevance to this day.

The conservation movements that began with John Muir, Theodore Roosevelt, and the Sierra Club (founded and presided over by Muir in 1892) and late 19th-century environmentalism have also been key influencers for a concern for land, water, and air that many have today. Aldo Leopold’s *Sand County Almanac* (1986) was useful in bringing the larger public into awareness of the value and fragility of America’s lands and Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (2002) dealt passionately with the harmful use of chemical pesticides in contemporary agriculture. In the 1990s, a handful of corporate voices like Paul Hawken (1993), Tom Chappell (1993, 1999), Anita Roddick (1991), and Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield (1997) began describing and calling for businesses to play their part in environmental stewardship. Books such as *Agricide: The Hidden Crisis*...
That Affects Us All (Fox, 1986) unveils research showing, for example, that “agribusiness’s industrialized exploitation of the land for export is in part responsible for widespread soil erosion, the depletion of deep-water aquifers, the deterioration of soil quality, and the pollution of our water and food” (p. xi; see also Kimbrell, 2002).


Agrarianism and Industrialism in Contrast

While most are content to believe that we have evolved, progressed, or inevitably found ourselves in the era of industry, others long to reclaim the agrarian values and way of life from an earlier time. Writer Barbara Kingsolver (2003) writes, “The values I longed to give my children—honesty, cooperativeness, thrift, mental curiosity, physical competence—were intrinsic to my agrarian childhood, where the community organized itself around a sustained effort of meeting people’s needs” (p. xiii). But how does this relate to such topics as values, postmodernism, and anomie? Norman Wirzba (2003) states “there are good reasons to suggest that a culture loses its indispensable moorings, and thus potentially distorts its overall aims, when it foregoes the sympathy and knowledge that grows out of cultivating (cultura) the land (ager)” (p. 1). He offers agrarianism as an alternative, describing it as

a deliberate and intentional way of living and thinking that takes seriously the failures and successes of the past as they have been realized in our engagement with the earth and with each other. . . . [It] is not simply the concern or prerogative of a few remaining farmers, but it is rather a comprehensive worldview that holds together in a synoptic vision the health of land and culture. (pp. 4, 5)
There are of course reasons why many farming communities turned away from working the land in favor of the promises of industrialism (Barlett, 1993). It would be unfair to say that none of these reasons were legitimate. In fact, economist/political theorist Barbara Ward (1959) has noticed “differences between the various forms and patterns of modern industrial life [which] are . . . wide enough to make up a complete economic spectrum from free to totally controlled” (p. 76). She added, however, in concluding her 1959 speech about Industrialism given to leaders in the nation of Ghana, that built in to industrial ability is “the problem that springs from man always wanting more things than he has material means to provide. . . . What shall we do and what shall we leave out, since our resources do not permit us to do everything?” (p. 76). (Table 3 provides a comparison and contrast between the agrarian worldview and the industrial worldview.)

What Is the Sociological Imagination?

As I mentioned in the introduction, C. Wright Mills coined the term “the sociological imagination” in his 1959 book by the same name. The use of the term imagination is interesting since it is unclear whether the imagination belongs to the realm of mind or brain. Is the imagination an immaterial property or is it physical, like the blood-pumping heart? It is, as we shall see, a way of seeing that breaks out of what one might expect. The image of the imagination has been useful for many authors wishing to encourage readers to make their particular field the common imaginative integrator of their work. Examples include The Marketing Imagination (Levitt, 1986), The Prophetic Imagination (Brueggemann, 1978), The Educational Imagination (Eisner, 2001), The
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Form of Industrialism</th>
<th>The Form of Agrarianism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Progress is good</td>
<td>Progress may not be good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical labor is neither good nor enjoyable</td>
<td>Physical labor is good and can be a pleasure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machines make life and work more efficient</td>
<td>Machines enslave us to drudgery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitless opportunities/resources; expansionism (“More!”)</td>
<td>Recognition of limits; restraint (“Enough.”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic dependence on corporations</td>
<td>Economic independence; sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Global economy</td>
<td>Local economies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free time for “leisure” and consumption</td>
<td>Rest time for community and nourishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education is for getting a job; paycheck</td>
<td>Education is for independent, intelligent citizenship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success</td>
<td>Contentment/Stewardship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast-paced life</td>
<td>Life based on rhythms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The future</td>
<td>The past and the present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapid change</td>
<td>Traditions valued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploitation</td>
<td>Nurture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waste</td>
<td>Reuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate gratification/profit</td>
<td>Long-term health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genetically alter food for freshness, preservation, and appeal</td>
<td>Leave food as is</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bottom line accounting</td>
<td>Both internal and external accounting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Utility</td>
<td>Beauty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Innovation; newness</td>
<td>Tradition; Experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>Virtuality</td>
<td>Place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science and Technology</td>
<td>Local knowledge and intelligence</td>
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Environmental Imagination (Buell, 1995), the research imagination (Hart, 1999), and The Statistical Imagination (Ritchey, 1999).

Anthony Giddens and Others on the Sociological Imagination

The sociology of Anthony Giddens (1990) is in line with the sociology of Mills. His assessment of our times is that we exist in a state of “high modernity” of which a postmodern society is still approaching. We live, suggests Giddens, in a time that reflects both the benefits as well as the misery of the modern era. Giddens (1987) sees what he sees because of this so-called sociological imagination. He also affirms this idea explicitly. He says of the term that it “has been so oft-quoted that it is in danger of being trivialized, and Mills himself used it in a rather vague sense. I mean by it several related forms of sensibility indispensable to sociological analysis” (p. 13). I note each of them below.

The Sensibilities

Giddens’s (1987) first “sensibility” is historical. “The first effort of sociological imagination that has to be exercised by the analyst of the industrialized societies today is that of recovering our own immediate past—the ‘world we have lost’” (p. 14). The second sensibility is anthropological. Giddens says it is “even more challenging to break away from the belief, explicit or implicit, that the modes of life which have developed in the West are somehow superior to those of other cultures” (p. 19). Finally, the third form Giddens lists “concerns the possibilities for the future.” This is about constructive critique and the possibility of change (p. 22).
Giddens's three sensibilities provide a helpful explication of the sociological imagination. But to these I would add the idea of a "moral" sensibility. Of course, postmodern morality is considered relative in most cases (Bloom, 1988). Here, the kind of morality is not being evaluated. The concern is that whatever its kind, it should form a grid by which to evaluate and understand social processes and what makes them good or not good. This moral sensibility is not in contradiction with the anthropological sensibility of Giddens since this moral grid would be supra-cultural and therefore used by the analyst in critique of his or her own cultural matrix.

Other Uses of the Sociological Imagination

Throughout history there have been individuals with this kind of moral sense. E.F. Schumacher, Dag Hammersköld, Vaclav Havel, and Martin Luther King, Jr., may be such individuals. Describing such men is not to say that leaders like these do not contradict each other at points. The point is that they "imagined society" from within a well-considered moral sensibility. Another example, akin to Wendell Berry in many ways, is Henry David Thoreau (Bingham, 2003).

But the sociological imagination is not just a matter of categorical thinking as outlined above. It is also intuitive. Sociologist Everett C. Hughes (Coser, 1994) says,

In my work I have relied a great deal on free association, sometimes on a freedom of association that could seem outrageous to the defenders of some established interest or cherished sentiment. Wright Mills must be given credit for the phrase sociological imagination. The essence of the sociological imagination is free association, guided but not hampered by a frame of reference internalized not quite into the unconscious. It must work even in one's dreams, but be where it can be called up at will. (p. 11)

Perhaps Hughes provides us with the clearest sense of how these combined sensibilities use the imagination. Patricia Hill Collins (1999) defines the sociological imagination as a
“holistic epistemology” (p. 559). Guttmann (1984) sees it as “the ability to understand otherness, to adopt another person’s perceptions” (p. 4). Alvin Gouldner’s (1980) version is his “reflexive sociology”. Mills (1959) himself said that that sociological imagination is

the capacity to shift from one perspective to another—from the political to the psychological; from examination of a single family to comparative assessment of the national budgets of the world; from the theological school to the military establishment; from consideration of an oil industry to studies of contemporary poetry. It is the capacity to range from the most impersonal and remote transformations to the most intimate features of the human self—and to see the relations between the two. (p. 7)

What, though, needs imagining? First, the sociological imagination will attempt to see things as they really are. “Things are not as they seem” is the imaginer’s foundational premise. This person is a critical theorist (Dandaneau, 2001) who understands it is “essential to develop the ability to analyze institutions and cultures . . . [as well as] a close examination of one’s own experience and an identification with one’s own rubs against the grain of social and cultural experience” (p. 5).

Peter L. Berger (1963) says that one of the goals of sociological consciousness (as he calls it) is “to debunk the social systems he is studying.” He explains how “ideologies . . . distort social reality” (p. 41) and of “uncovering the social functionality of ideological pretensions” (p. 41). This, he says, is the “penetration of verbal smoke screens to the unadmitted and often unpleasant mainsprings of action” (p. 42). Use of the sociological consciousness will allow one to “in some measure be detached from the taken-for-granted postures of society” (p. 47). That is the critical side. But good criticism can also be constructive. The individual with a sociological imagination will see a better way, in light of the insight he or she has.
Mills’s Methodology

In his book (1959), Mills says that Spencer, Comte, Ross, Durkheim, Mannheim, Marx, Veblen, Schumpeter, Lecky, and Weber (each one “imaginatively aware”) all asked three sorts of questions: (1) What is the structure of this particular society as a whole? (2) Where does this society stand in human history? (3) What varieties of men and women now prevail in this society and in this period? (p. 7).

For Mills, this kind of questioning was not meant to end abstractly or even academically. He observed that “an ideal personality is emerging in American society . . . the alienated individual who wants to become a cheerful and willing robot” (Scimecca, 1977, p. 98). Mills wanted people to be free from this restraint. He believed that “the individual, in order to be free, has to be aware of the structural constraints which envelop his existence . . . and intervening to do something about them” (p. 104). Lemert (1999) says that Mills’s “ideal of the sociological imagination still held out hope that if knowledge were wrenched away from the pretenses of apolitical social science, it might find its way back as power in the lives of ordinary people” (p. 282). This passion is what frustrated him with others in the field of sociology. He lambasted Talcott Parsons and the Grand Theorists for their belief in “one answer to the problem of social order” (Scimecca, 1997, p. 103) and he criticized the Abstracted Empiricists who were “more concerned with scientific methods than with sociology itself” (p. 103). It is the conviction of the necessary connection of sociology to social reality that characterizes the book Character and Social Structure (1953) that Mills co-authored with Hans Gerth. In that book, there is a chapter on “The Sociology of Leadership.”
What Is Leadership?

The topic of leadership in the postmodern era is any uneasy conversation. That sentiment certainly resonates with the anti-authority perspective of the times we are now in (Sennett, 1993). But perhaps it is not the existence of leadership that is the problem, but its definition; its very character may need to be reimagined. Certainly attention should be given to the functions and practice of leadership. Mills and Gerth (1953) suggest that “one of the functions of the leader is to import larger codes into the subgroup which he leads. The ‘leader’ is a mediator between the members of his group and the larger social structure” (p. 409). In other words, leaders pass on beliefs, attitudes, norms – and values.

The Importance of Values in Leadership

It should be noted that material dealing with the relationship of leadership to values is found more and more frequently in the literature, although in-depth analyses are still forthcoming. There are some recent contributions that focus on leadership and ethics (Ciulla, 2002, 2004; Dalla Costa, 1998; Lennick & Kiel, 2005) but do not address the matter of agrarian values as I have introduced that concept here. In this project, I observe both overlap and distinction on the matters of ethics and values. As already noted, values are not mere preferences, but convictions that guide and discipline behavioral choices. The leader’s values, therefore, are part and parcel with ethical practice.

Key contributors on the theme of values in leadership include James MacGregor Burns’s Pulitzer Prize-winning Leadership (1978) in which he defines leadership as “leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations—the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations—of both leaders and
followers" (p. 19). He says “the genius of leadership lies in the manner in which leaders see and act on their own and their followers’ values and motivations” (p. 19).

Badaracco and Ellsworth (1989) see the shaping and infusing of values as the key task of leadership. “The essence of values-driven leadership is infusing intangibles into decision making throughout the company” (p. 187). Success in this task will lead to an improvement of performance (based on inner motivation), communication, and loyalty to purpose (even above loyalty to the leader).

Values are important for John W. Gardner (1990) as well. In On Leadership, he comments on the decay of values saying, “there must be perpetual rebuilding. Each generation must rediscover the living elements in its own tradition and adapt them to present realities. To assist in that rediscovery is one of the tasks of leadership” (pp. 13, 14).

Gilbert W. Fairholm (1991) suggests “a few founding values that celebrate the individual . . . values such as self-direction and enhancement or the individual’s talents” and “common values intrinsically held” such as “high-quality service, innovation, empowerment” (pp. x, xi). The research of Kouzes and Posner (1993, 1995) has also brought out the explicit need for values in the life of those who lead. “To be credible as a leader,” they say, “you must first clarify your own values, the standards by which you choose to live your life” (1993, p. 52).

In 1994, Ronald A. Heifetz suggested that “leadership stirs feelings because leadership engages our values. Indeed the term itself is value-laden” (p. 13). Heifetz notes that our language of leadership suggests confusion: on the one hand it describes people we admire and on the other hand it denotes people we may not admire who act
badly. “We talk about the leader of the gang, the mob, the organization—the person who is given informal or formal authority by others—regardless of the values they represent or the product they play a key part in producing” (p. 13). Barbara Kellerman (2004) picks up on this in her recent book, Bad Leadership. O’Toole (1996) suggests that instead of moving toward the natural “Machiavellian” approach to leadership, effective leaders should “adopt the unnatural behavior of always leading by the pull of inspiring values” (p. 11). For him, respect for people is “the most fundamental of moral principles” (p. 11).

Others, such as Blanchard and O’Connor (1997) and Kuczmarski and Kuczmarski (1995) put focus on the “values of the organization” and the importance of corporate alignment.

Leadership and the Sociological Imagination

Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (1997) wants his readers to recognize “that the task of providing men and women with that ‘sociological imagination’ for which C. W. Mills (1959) appealed years ago, has never been so important as it is now, under conditions of postmodernity” (p. 110). Accordingly, I would argue that a key task of leadership is to guide and educate in the task of imaginative thinking. The leader concerned for wholeness, not profit alone, will want those who follow along to see the whole and how the parts contribute or detract from goodness. Therefore, in looking at a system, a process, a product, a relationship, a society, a method or a goal, the leader will want to model and empower followers to see each of these and how each of these touch each other. In the sense that postmodernism exists as the consequences of modernity, one
of the consequences is breakdown. The postmodern heartbeat is for wholeness, but the reality is brokenness. Leaders are looked to for healing.

It is also reasonable, therefore, that individuals and teams providing leadership to our organizations would do well to learn from those with a sociological imagination, develop it themselves, and teach it to others. They need the sensibilities that Giddens and I have described. Without the historical sensibility, the leader may fail to appreciate how things got to be the way they are and may tend to repeat the failures of the past. Without the anthropological sensibility, the leader will uncritically affirm the ideas and ways of her own worldview, unable to recognize the cultural weaknesses that surround her and the cultural strengths outside her own context. Without the possibility sensibility, the leader will be a fatalist, with no vision and an attitude that is debilitating to those he leads. And without the moral sensibility, the leader will lack a measure of success that is concerned for what is good, defaulting, perhaps, to what is merely profitable.

Who Is Wendell Berry?

In chapter 1, I introduced the reader to Wendell Berry. The question now is how his works will be used to reveal his sociological imagination and his values.

The Sociology of Literature

The sociology of literature provides an academic justification for using literature in sociological research. In his book The Writer as Seer, Robert Wilson (1979) comments on Walker Percy’s term, the novelist of ultimate concern. He says, “Such writers ask radical questions about the nature of man and about his role in the social and physical universe he inhabits” (p. xiii). Wilson is defining the essence of Berry’s
contribution when he comments on the ways the literature of social protest shakes the organization of a society. He says that “the artist does not call attention to some disorder in the surface forms of contemporary life but rather presents us with a new way of seeing and valuing” (p. 14).

How does one determine which authors are worthy of having their books serve as a source for research?

Lucien Goldmann has argued that in the case of great writers ... the purely sociological conditions of writing are surmounted and transcended so that the meanings with the texts are unrelated to the market conditions of authorship. He suggests that second-rate writers can be defined precisely as those who do not succeed in freeing themselves from the dictates of the social-economic context, so that sociological conditions penetrate their work, dominating its structure and content and giving it purely temporal significance. (Laurenson & Swingewood, 1972, p. 20)

Wendell Berry may not be a best-selling author, but it certainly would never be said of him that he is bound to reflect the values of his socio-economic context. On the contrary, he brings a strong rebuke to the socio-economic values of the postmodern West.

Unearthing Berry’s Literary Contribution

Berry’s skill as a writer bridges the gap between polemicist, poet, and storyteller. Yet the three forms of writing synchronize in his coherent voice.

His Essays

An essay is a “short nonfiction prose work of limited scope, intended to prove a particular point or to illustrate or interpret a specific subject” (Ross, 1995). In Berry’s more than 100 book-bound essays, his goal is to convince his readers to reconsider certain lost or fading values. In his essays, agrarianism ... is no small whittled-down philosophy for rural folks. It is a full-blown philosophy rooted in the realities of soil and nature as “the standard” by which
we also come to judge much more. . . . The logic of agrarianism, in Berry’s work, unfolds like a fractal through the division and incoherence of the modern world. (Orr, 2003, p. 184)

His biographer, Andrew J. Angyal (1995), says that Berry’s first set of essays in *The Long-Legged House* (2004a)

deal with environmental, political, and personal concerns. They demonstrate Berry’s development as a moral thinker and his commitment to the Thoreauvian tradition of social protest that begins with a transformation on one’s personal values and lifestyle. Berry defines his understanding of the moral and ethical responsibilities of a purely local citizenship. (p. 33)

In a more recent essay, “The Whole Horse,” Berry (2003b) seeks to persuade the reader of the value of agrarianism over against industrialism. He says,

The fundamental difference between industrialism and agrarianism is this: Whereas industrialism is a way of thought based on monetary capital and technology, agrarianism is a way of thought based on land. Agrarianism, furthermore, is a culture at the same time that it is an economy. Industrialism is an economy before it is a culture. Industrial culture is an accidental by-product of the ubiquitous effort to sell unnecessary products for more than they are worth. (p. 116)

Berry uses his skill in crafting language to communicate his ideas persuasively. He is pointed and indicting, but gentlemanly as well.

**His Poetry**

Lionel Basney places Berry’s poetic tradition within the “didactic” tradition of which wisdom and practical living are at the heart. He says that “poetry sings the understandings, and undertakings, that make sustained cultural life possible” (p. 175).

Berry’s poetry is not abstract, but deeply placed within its subject and therefore “teaches by affording a vision of, and by praising, a fruitful, moral, coherent way of life” (p. 177).
Two sample poems illustrate his contribution: the first is in his "Mad Farmer" voice (Berry, 1985) and the second is one of his "Sabbath" poems, written on his Sunday morning walks (Berry, 1998):

Manesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front

Love the quick profit, the annual raise, 
vacation with pay. Want more 
of everything ready made. Be afraid 
to know your neighbors and to die. 
And you will have a window in your head. 
Not even your future will be a mystery 
any more. Your mind will be punched in a card 
and shut away in a little drawer. 
When they want you to buy something 
they will call you. When they want you 
to die for profit they will let you know. 
So, friends, every day do something 
that won’t compute. Love the Lord. 
Love the world. Work for nothing. 
Take all that you have and be poor. 
Love someone who does not deserve it . . .

(p. 151)

1979, X

Whatever is foreseen in joy 
Must be lived out from day to day. 
Vision held open in the dark 
By our ten thousand days of work. 
Harvest will fill the barns; for that 
The hand must ache, the face must sweat.

And yet no leaf or grain is filled 
By work of ours; the field is tilled 
And left to grace. That we may reap, 
Great work is done while we’re asleep.

When we work well, a Sabbath mood 
Rests on our day, and finds it good.

(p. 18)
With Thoreau, Berry (1972) understands nature poetry as the “healthy speech” (p. 14) that “seeks to give us a sense of our proper place in the scheme of things” (p. 16) and that its “natural effect . . . is the religious one of humility and awe. It does not seem farfetched,” he continues, “to assume that this religious effect might, in turn, produce the moral effect of care and competence and frugality in the use of the world” (pp. 16, 17).

**His Novels and Short Stories**

Stories make and remake worldviews. When well-crafted, they take us by surprise by placing an alternative view of reality within our imagination. Good stories stay with us and the memorable characters hover over us in critique of our choices and behaviors. Berry’s stories all occur in the same place geographically over a 100-year period. The fictional place is Port William, Kentucky, and the time is the whole of the 1900s. It includes mostly the same families over a period of generations. Already the reader recognizes the contribution of Berry’s short stories and novels: What was it like to live in a small rural community over the period of time when industry, technology, and war arrived? How did this affect their economics, their relationships, and their character? Berry’s stories are a pleasure to read but they offer no utopian bubble, no inaccurate suggestion of idealized small town life. Yet the question of what qualifies as a “good life” is a resounding, though inexplicit theme.

In *A World Lost*, Berry (2002) describes a simpler world and the value of tradition. The adult narrator, Andy Catlett, recalls his childhood memory of two Negroes who worked for his Grandpa and lived in a little house on the edge of the woods:

I was comfortable with the two of them as I was with nobody else, and I am unsure why. It was not because, as a white child, I was free or privileged with them, for they expected and sometimes required decent behavior of me, like the other grown-ups I
knew. They had not many possessions, and the simplicity in that may have appealed
to me; they did not spend much time in anxiety about things. They had too a
quietness that was not passive but profound. Dick especially had the gift of
meditativeness. Because he was getting old, what he meditated on was the past. In
his talk he dreamed us back into the presence of a supreme work mule named Fanny,
a preeminent foxhound by the name of Strive, a long-running and uncatchable fox. (p.
226)

The *New York Times Book Review* says of his prose fiction “Mr. Berry’s sentences are
exquisitely constructed, suggesting the cyclic rhythms of his agrarian world” (cited on
back of book jacket, Berry, 2004b).

Unearthing His Sociological Imagination

Berry “presents us with a new way of seeing and valuing” (Wilson, 1979, p. 14)
because he has an incisive imagination and a skilled pen. Berry was a professor of
English at the University of Kentucky (from 1964 to 1977 and again from 1987 to 1989),
but is not sociologically trained in the academic sense. Yet he speaks of such social
issues as neighborhood, economics, marriage, and work. His approach is not like “the
quantitative researcher, the archeologist dealing with evidences of a culture, or the
sociologist measuring its effects.” He is more like

the cultural or social anthropologist, [who] . . . is committed to a different kind of
thoroughness—one based on the depth and comprehensiveness of his insight into the
subject culture. . . . The only way in which a researcher could possibly go about the
job of creating a relation between such entities would be to simultaneously know both
of them, to realize the relative character of his own culture through the concrete
formulation of another. Thus gradually, in the course of fieldwork, he himself
becomes the link between cultures through his living in both of them, and it is this
“knowledge” and competence that he draws upon in describing and explaining the
subject culture. (Wagner, 1995, p. 56)

Having twice made the intentional choice to leave the academic world, it is possible that
Berry may resist the comparisons I have suggested (i.e., sociologist, anthropologist). Yet
the illustration offers a strong example of his unique ability to live within Western culture
and still be highly capable of explaining and critiquing it objectively. In a published letter, Berry’s Stanford University writing teacher Wallace Stegner (1991) comments that he has been “apparently immune to the Angst” (p. 49) of his times and therefore writes books that are “revolutionary.” Stegner says that Berry’s books “fly in the face of accepted opinion and approved fashion. They reassert values so commonly forgotten or repudiated that, re-asserted, they have the force of novelty” (p. 50).

As a literary man, Berry affirms the importance of imagination. He says, in a statement with which Mills would resonate in part, “The imagination is our way in to the divine Imagination, permitting us to see wholly—as whole and holy—what we perceive as scattered, as order what we perceive as random” (Berry, 1983, p. 90). One of his poetic mentors, William Carlos Williams, believed that “the imagination takes as its proper facilitating instrument the poetic text and thereby serves to train the perceiver in the discovery of our world” (C. Collins, 1991). Like Williams, Thomas Hardy (Hasan, 1982), and Sinclair Lewis—whose “imaginative frame of reference was sociological” (Conroy, 1987, p. 80)—Berry’s novels and essays are forced into thematic repetition by the limitation of his sociological imagination (p. 82).

**His Sociological Imagination and the Values of a Social/Agrarian Vision**

It should be noted here that Berry’s writings are not merely agricultural. While his base of concern is the land, he is also concerned with what happens upon—and in ongoing connection to—the land. Thus matters of buying and selling, the influence of “experts,” war and terrorism, racism, abortion, sex, protest, food, tools, the use of
language, women, and computers are all part of Wendell Berry's interconnected agrarian perspective that serves as a complete social vision.

Berry, as suggested by Giddens (1987), applies the key sensibilities in his use of the sociological imagination. As to the historic sensibility, one of Berry's foundational premises is not to forget the past but to learn from those who have gone before. He believes in a stocked memory and in the act of cultures remembering. His whole Port William series traces the history of a small community in the transitions of the 20th century. Anthropologically, Berry looks admiring (and at times, critically) at the farm cultures of the Amish, Peruvians, Chinese, Italians, and the Irish. Here he suggests that we have much to learn from these historically successful farms. He also affirms the farms of other agrarian farmers that he has visited in North America. He has much to say in the negative about the farming techniques of industrial agribusiness. Strategically speaking, Berry has been called a "prophet," even "the prophetic American voice of our day" (P. Smith, 1987, p. B1). While Berry is often critical of "future thinking," suggesting that we have enough to do in taking care of today, he still maintains forward momentum. As Orr (2003) suggests,

Prophets do not just condemn, they intend to move us toward better possibilities. They call to mind a time when we were better people, but they also look forward to a time when we might be restored to some semblance of grace. . . . Prophets are poised between the past and a better future. (p. 176)

And morally, Berry consistently calls his readers to reject an exploitive life and work and to pursue a virtuous life of goodness, quality, care, and right conduct between people.
Unearthing His Values

Literary sociologist Alan Swingewood says “the task of the sociologist is not simply to discover historical and social reflection (or refraction) in works of literature, but to articulate the nature of the values embedded within particular literary works” (Laurenson & Swingwood, 1972, p. 16). Berry’s values are elucidated throughout his writing. I will show that many or most of his values are in direct contrast to the organizational structures and leadership positions in the modern/postmodern transition. The challenge to follow is not so much be to find his values, but to pull them together into appropriate categories that speak to business leaders, their context, and their craft. That is the task of chapter 3.

Conclusion

One’s worldview becomes most clearly understood when one’s values are revealed. Berry’s worldview allows him to see the social structure from the perspective of agrarian concerns, agrarian values. He writes as one of the final few who stand for a rich heritage of total health, tangible community life, and practical virtue.

The postmodern mind struggles with agrarian thinking. On the one hand, there is resonance with health and all things “real” (that is, what is “organic” or “natural”). What is more, the postmodern shares the agrarian’s skepticism of progress as an absolute good. On the other hand, the postmodern person is generally restless, resisting the agrarian ideal of long-term work and stewardship in a single place. The postmodern person is unfavorable to physical labor, loves comfort, and is enamored by the “easy life” that technology brings.
Our culture, therefore, exists in a time of apparent industrial determinism. The big picture, affecting everyone's little reality, is this: It is inevitable, you cannot do anything about it. Berry resists this deterministic perspective—strongly—and invites us to see the world differently. He invites us to take responsibility. His challenge is to make a choice for commitment, even if that choice is not fully informed, as no choice ever is. It is my conviction that today's modern and postmodern business professionals need an encounter with Wendell Berry. The business schools are educating them to be good at making and counting the money — and that is about all. Berry can teach them about what it means to be good. His socio-ecological imagination allows leaders to see through their office walls to the social structure they live within and to see the land and land communities that sustain them.

In chapter 3, I further describe Berry's version of Mills's sociological imagination. I also present some introductory comments regarding Berry's place in historic moral theory, describing, as well, the nature of his contribution.
CHAPTER 3

BERRY SPEAKS, PART 1: HIS SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION AND MORAL IDEOLOGY

It is now time to move toward a classification of Wendell Berry's system of values. My burden in this chapter is to describe the nature and historic location of Berry's moral contribution, in light of his sociological imagination. In this chapter and the next—where I discuss and list Berry's actual values—I intend to stay true to my definition of values as preferred convictions that guide and discipline our behavior choices. Because I understand Berry's contribution to have profound social, moral, historic, and up-to-date relevance, this chapter is necessary to avoid a simplistic launching into a mere list of his preferred convictions.

First, I illustrate his sociological imagination by looking closely at one of his essays as a case. Then, I consider what it is, broadly speaking, that Berry has to offer: A list of values? A social vision? A moral ideology? A world view? A theory of economics? Third, I briefly review philosophical ethical theory and attempt to locate Wendell Berry's moral system. Finally, I briefly consider who he is addresses in his writings and begin to consider how his ideas may apply to those in positions of leadership.
Wendell Berry’s Sociological Imagination at Work

Berry’s unique and important values emerge because of his ability to look at social dynamics through the grid of his sociological imagination. Mills (1959) well defines Berry’s work when he says,

In factual and moral concerns, in literary work and in political analysis, the qualities of this imagination are regularly demanded. In a great variety of expressions they have become central features of intellectual endeavor and cultural sensibility. Leading critics exemplify these qualities. . . . Novelists—whose serious work embodies the most widespread definitions of human reality—frequently possess this imagination. . . . As images of ‘human nature’ become more problematic, an increasing need is felt to pay closer yet more imaginative attention to the social routines and catastrophes which reveal (and which shape) man’s nature in this time of civil unrest and ideological conflict . . . the sociological imagination . . . is a quality of mind that seems most dramatically to promise an understanding of the intimate realities of ourselves in connection with larger social realities. (pp. 14, 15)

To illustrate Berry’s sociological imagination, I have chosen an essay from Another Turn of the Crank called “Conserving Forest Communities” (Berry, 1995) to serve as a case study. First, I show how he builds his insight out of the clash of values he perceives within personal biography and history. Following this, I look at how he answers the three primary questions asked by the Mills (and the other classical sociologists he affirms):

1. How is society organized, particularly in relationship to the influence of power and knowledge and how are people stratified from one another?

2. What are our unique concerns in this historic epoch?

3. What marks those who are free, content, and self-aware?

I then show how Berry uses the four sensibilities of the sociological imagination—historical, anthropological, hopeful, and moral—in the matter of discussing
the need for a forest economy. Finally, I highlight some of the unique aspects of Berry’s sociological imagination.

In “Conserving Forest Communities,” Berry (1995) starts out as Mills suggests, biographically:

I live in Henry County, near the lower end of the Kentucky River Valley, on a small farm that is half woodland. Starting from my back door, I could walk for days and never leave the woods except to cross the roads. (p. 25)

He soon moves on to how this region has dealt with the forest historically: “The history of these now-forested slopes over the last two centuries can be characterized as a cyclic alternation of abuse and neglect. . . . In my part of Kentucky, as in other parts, we never developed a local forest economy” (p. 26). He now broaches upon the description of what Mills (1959) calls a “trouble” (p. 8). He is facing this trouble along with his fellow Kentuckians:

I am unhappy to remember every time I look—for the landscape itself reminds me—that I am a dweller in a forest for which there is, properly speaking, no local forest culture and no local forest economy. That is to say that I live in a threatened forest. (p. 27)

Later, he broadens the personal trouble and makes it collective, “By ‘we’ I mean all the people of our state, of course, but I mean also, and especially, the people of our state’s rural counties and towns and neighborhoods” (pp. 37, 38).

Berry (1995) values the forest and knows the forest has value (“However valuable our forests are now, they are nothing like so valuable as they can become” [p. 31]). He also knows the forests are threatened and that this threat is a social—not merely private—issue. The “issue,” then, the “public matter” (Mills, 1959, p. 8) is twofold: (a) the local community has no shared forest economy, and (b) the timber companies give evidence of exploitive tendencies. He explains the latter as involving “the building of a large factory
in a forested region, predictably accompanied by political advertisements about ‘job creation’ and ‘improving the local economy’” (Berry, 1995, p. 29). He acknowledges the few advantages and then proceeds, “but from the point of view of either the forest or the local human community, there are also a number of problems associated with this kind of operation” (p. 29). He goes on to describe these problems, but that does not, as Mills (1959) says, complete the intellectual journey (p. 6). For Mills, the analyst must consider the three primary questions given above and illustrated in Berry’s essay.

**What Is the Structure of Society?**

Berry (1995) views Henry County as unique, yet in many ways as a microcosm of Kentucky, which in turn is a microcosm of many national concerns. For Berry, a total societal assessment includes nature and agriculture as well as human culture. From largest to smallest, nature, agriculture, and culture are nested within each other and have an interdependent existence. There exists outside of these and as frequent visitors, members of industry, particularly, the logging industry. He expects some landowners will sell the rights to his trees and thereby

> the old cycle is repeated, as neglect is once more superseded by abuse . . . damage . . . to the land and the young trees. . . . There is no local interest connecting the woods workers to the woods. They do not regard the forest as a permanent resource but rather as a purchased “crop” that must be “harvested” as quickly and as cheaply as possible. (1995, p. 27)

Why would a landowner allow this? Berry says that “after the trees have reached marketable size, especially in a time of agricultural depression, the landowners come under pressure to sell them” (p. 27). This hints at a broader social issue, but as a disciplined writer, Berry knows this is a matter for another essay at a later time.
He also knows that there are "people in places of power who will want to solve our local problems by inviting in some great multinational corporation" (p. 37). Berry's concern is that the invited outsiders become careless exploiters. He detects deceptive language and predicts dour results. The structure of society, then, is made up of industrialists—large and wealthy and powerful—who are capable of taking advantage of small, struggling, landowners and rural communities.

What Is the Place of This Society in This Historic Epoch?

This is an epoch of industriolatry. The good brought by the god Industry implies that it is inappropriate to question means. Industrial ends—which Berry (1995) will describe as being significantly short-sighted—are described by their most prosperous beneficiaries as having local benefit as well. On the one hand, as Berry notes regarding the single sale of tree rights, "the only local economic benefits may well be the single check paid by the timber company to the landowner" (p. 28) while the "political advertisements" to a local community by the timber industrialists wanting to move in will describe supposed large scale goods such as "job creation" and "improving the local economy" (p. 29). But Berry lays out his understanding of the historic context:

With few exceptions our country people, generation after generation, have been providers of cheap fuels and raw materials to be used or manufactured in other places and to the profit of other people. They have added no value to what they have produced, and they have gone onto the markets without protection. They have sold their labor, their mineral rights, their crops, their livestock and their trees with the understanding that the offered price was the price that they must take. . . . We have developed a psychology of a subject people, willing to take whatever we have been offered to believe whatever we have been told by our self-designated "superiors." (p. 32)

Historically speaking, it may have always been this way. But throughout history, social and philosophical analysts have made clear that this way is not the way it should be. Part
of the tragedy of the U.S., having matured (or, immatures) into this way of being, is that our prosperous ends have persuaded a global world to adopt our national means. Berry (1995) offers a moral indictment on the historic epoch in which he lives:

By this time, the era of cut-and-run economics ought to be finished. Such an economy cannot be rationally defended or even apologized for. The proofs of its immense folly, heartlessness, and destructiveness are everywhere. Its failure as a way of dealing with the natural world and human society can no longer be sanely denied. That this economic system persists and grows large and strong in spite of its evident failure has nothing to do with rationality, or for that matter, with evidence. It persists because, embodied now in multinational corporations, it has discovered a terrifying truth: If you can control a people’s economy, you don’t need to worry about its politics; its politics have become irrelevant. If you control people’s choices as to whether or not they will work, and where they will work, and what they will do, and how well they will do it, and what they will eat and wear, and the genetic makeup of their crops and animals, and what they do for amusement, then why should you worry about freedom of speech? (p. 34)

What Characterizes People Who Flourish in This Society?

Berry (1995) acknowledges that the existence of an exploitive social system is built on two groups. First, there are the shareholders.

We must remember that this large [industrial] operation involves a large investment. And experience has taught us that large investments tend to take precedence over ecosystems and communities. . . . The ideal of such operations is maximum profit to the owners and shareholders, who are not likely to be a member of the local community. (p. 30)

This links to the second group of people who profit from industrial logging (and agriculture)—the absentee owners of corporations. (Berry’s wish is that business owners would live locally so that they would experience the results—good or bad—of their activities on a personal level.)

However, Berry (1995) places his focus on the people of Kentucky, those faced with the problem. “A totalitarian economy might ‘correct’ itself, of course, by a total catastrophe—total explosion or total contamination or total ecological exhaustion”
(p. 35), but Berry believes that “a far better correction . . . would be cumulative process by which states, regions, communities, households, or even individuals would begin to work toward economic self-determination and an appropriate measure of local independence” (p. 35). He speaks Mills’s language when he says, “Such a course of action would involve us in a renewal of thought about our history and our predicament. We must ask again whether or not we really want to be a free people” (p. 35). Berry then makes connections that Mills did not think to make, but that I think he would approve of in accordance with the sociological imagination as a method:

We must consider again the linkages between land and landownership and land use and liberty. And we must ask, as we have not very seriously asked before, what are the best ways to use and to care for our land, our neighbors, and our natural resources. (p. 35)

Those who prevail—in the current system—are those with power and whose moral values are consistent with the prevailing cultural moral mind-set (“if it makes a profit, its good”). But Berry, with Mills, would like to free people from the consciousness of a “cheerful robot” in order to become citizens who are responsible, participate, risk, cooperate with one another, and care.

I conclude this analysis of Berry’s use of the sociological imagination in the article “Conserving Forest Communities” by noting a few ways he uses the four sensibilities offered by Giddens and me in chapter 1.

The Historic Sensibility

As I have already shown, Berry (1995) looks at the historic flaws in his own social context as a cause for the industrial vulnerability that he and his neighbors now face. He says,
It will be a tragedy if the members of Kentucky’s rural communities ever again allow themselves passively to be sold off as providers of cheap goods and cheap labor. To put the bounty and the health of our land, our only commonwealth, into the hands of people who do not live on it and share its fate will always be an error. For whatever determines the fortune of the land determines also the fortune of the people. If the history of Kentucky teaches anything, it teaches that. (p. 33)

The Anthropological Sensibility

In Berry’s essays, he is often interested in comparing our approaches against what he considers the successful approaches of other cultures. There is a clear example of that in this essay. Toward the end of Berry’s (1995) description of what he believes would be a good forest economy (pp. 38-44), Berry says, “To assure myself that what I have described as a good forest economy is a real possibility, I went to visit the tribal forests of the Menominee Indians in northern Wisconsin” (p. 41). He goes on to describe what he learned from the forest manager, others, and from seeing for himself. He concludes with one critique of the Indian economy “that in all other ways it is excellent” (p. 43). He then says of their economy, “We have much to learn from it . . . The Menominee, following the dictates of their culture, have always done their work bearing in mind the needs of the seventh generation of their descendents” (pp. 43, 44).

The Hopeful Sensibility

Berry (1995) does not have much hope that industry will change, but he does have hope that local people can learn to make better choices. It is under the guidance of this hope that he presents eight descriptors of a good forest economy. They are realistic, but not quick-fixes either. For example, he believes that a good forest economy would be locally complex. People in the local community would be employed in forest management, logging, and sawmilling, in a variety of value-adding small factories and shops, and in satellite or supporting industries. The
local community, that is, would be enabled by its economy to realize the maximum income from its local resource. This is the opposite of a colonial economy. It would answer unequivocally the question: to whom is the value added? (pp. 39, 40)

The Moral Sensibility

Above, I illustrated a bit of Berry’s moral concerns. Here are a few other indicators.

1. Care of the land, which is a value regarding a thing of value, comes out when he says,

   Almost nobody has tried to figure out or has ever wondered what might be the best use and the best care of [forested slopes]. Often the trees have been regarded merely as obstructions to row cropping, which, because of the steepness of the terrain, has necessarily caused severe soil losses from water erosion. If an accounting is ever done, we will be shocked to learn how much ecological capital this kind of farming required for an almost negligible economic return. (Berry, 1995, p. 26)

2. When economic short-cuts are taken, Berry shows a concern for others, even those in yet-to-be-born generations. It is morally unjust when “labor and materials must be procured as cheaply as possible, and real human and ecological costs must be ‘externalized’—charged to taxpayers or to the future” (p. 30).

3. He also makes the point here, and in many of his writings, that when we put to use advancements in technology, there may be moral implications. Here, the timber company can get more done, using fewer men, with the employment of mechanical skidders. This, for them, would produce the greatest volume and therefore the greatest profit in the shortest time. Berry (1995) responds,

   The community, on the contrary—and just as much as a matter of self-interest—might reasonably prefer the way of working that employed the most people for the longest time and did the least damage to the forest and the soil. The community might conclude that the machine, in addition to the ecological costs of its manufacture and use, not only replaced the work of one man but more than halved the working time of another. From the point of view of the community, it is not an improvement
when the number of employed workers is reduced by the introduction of labor-saving machinery... By using more people to do better work, the economic need is met, but so are other needs that are social and ecological, cultural and religious. (pp. 36, 37)

4. Berry (1995) suggests that in a forest economy it is necessary “to leave some wilderness tracts of significant acreage unused” (p. 40). In what he says next, it becomes clear that in addition to value placed upon nature, this is a moral issue. He says, “Because of its inclination to be proud and greedy, human character needs this practical deference toward things greater than itself, that is, I think, a religious deference” (pp. 40, 41).

5. I conclude with Berry’s conclusion. Berry (1995) suggests that a forest economy is a long-term economy. “A forest makes things slowly; a good forest economy would therefore be a patient economy. It would also be an unselfish one, for good foresters must always look toward harvests that they will not live to reap” (p. 44).

This essay is a superb sample of Berry’s sociological imagination. Not every essay is as complete in this sense, but I dare say that many come close. He sees the social system through his version of the sociological imagination, yet consistent with how Mills described it. What is more, Berry and Mills share a similar goal to see members of society experience freedom. His values (set out in chapter 4) further describe the preferred convictions about entities, practices, and ends that lead to freedom.

There are some unique features in Wendell Berry’s sociological imagination that both complement and add to the insights of Mills and Giddens. I will describe two such features.

First, Berry sees beyond traditional sociology as only a human concern and incorporates the social connection to the natural world. On this note he is in sync with
leaders in the field of *environmental sociology*, such as William R. Catton, Jr., and Riley E. Dunlap of Washington State University. They have argued—and Berry has illustrated—that

the relationship between social class and environmental degradation or the impact of energy shortages on society were qualitatively different (because they treated environmental phenomena as variables) than studies of public opinion toward environmental issues . . . and that the former constituted a true environmental sociology rather than just a sociology of environmental issues. (Dunlap, 2002, ¶ 8)

In one of their early articles, Catton and Dunlap (1980) mention some reasons why sociology has not included an ecological element. I will mention three of their reasons that Berry's "sociology" responds to in his work.

1. Sociology came of age amidst the exuberance of the modern industrial era. It was, therefore, blind to some of the worldview biases that it inherited. With the failure of the Populist Movement and the arrival of Fordism, the agrarian way was in decline. The fathers of the discipline resigned themselves to work in terms of the new, industrial paradigm, even if they perceived it as an "Iron Cage," as Max Weber (2001) himself described it.

2. Furthermore, "certain factors distinctive to sociology also contributed to its adoption of an ecologically unsound set of assumptions about human society" (Catton & Dunlap, 1980, p. 18). There was, for example, "the Durkheimian emphasis on the "objective reality of social facts"" (p. 19). To state it in the negative, the discipline was grounded in the lack of interest in anything that was not explicitly about human social relations.

3. The "term 'environment' is typically used by sociologists to mean . . . the groups to which one belongs, the institutions (economic, educational, religious) in which

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one participates, and the community in which one resides” (p. 22). In Catton and Dunlap’s (1980) analysis of sociology, environment “seldom denotes the physical proprieties of the settings in which individuals participate, or the characteristics of the biophysical region . . . in which communities are located” (p. 22).

Berry’s sociology counters these reflections on modernistic academic sociology. His understanding of the need to blend imagination and reality makes for a Millsian postmodern sociology that is thoughtful not just of land dwellers, but land itself:

What you have imagined will always be somewhat informed by what you have actually known, and your actual knowing will always be somewhat informed by imagination. The extremes of reality and imagination, within the limits of human experience, are never pure. And so there is always some risk of betrayal. It is possible to allow imagination to abuse reality; it is possible by an imagination to violate a real intimacy—and this leaves aside the possibility of deliberately tattling for meanness or revenge or some version of success. It is always possible too that imagination may be debased by a false or too narrow understanding of what is real.

Both imagination and a competent sense of reality are necessary to our life, and they necessarily discipline one another. Only imagination, for example, can give our home landscape and community a presence in our minds that is a sort of vision at once geographical and historical, practical and protective, affectionate and hopeful. But if that vision is not repeatedly corrected by a fairly accurate sense of reality, if the vision becomes fantastical or merely wishful, then both we and the landscape fall into danger; we may destroy the landscape, or the landscape (especially if damaged by us in our illusion) may destroy us. (Berry, 2000b, p. 85)

Second, Berry lives outside academia and cannot be properly relegated to a single intellectual discipline. In Mills’s (1959) words, he has been able to “remain independent, to do [his] own work, to select [his] own problems” (p. 181). This has not, of course, always been so. At various points, Berry taught in the English departments of four academic institutions. But his ambivalence (and lack of institutional loyalty) in this regard comes through in his writing and in his personal history. This has multiple benefits for his sociological imagination:
1. He feels no obligation to the boundaries that sociology, or any other discipline, imposes.

2. Further, as a social critic, he can be interdisciplinary—drawing upon such traditions as literary, agricultural, historic, political, and religious.

3. He works “for” no one and so feels no temptation to cater to the client in his writing. He does not fall prey to the accusation he posits on the Land Grant-Colleges that betrayed their moral charter to support local farmers and agrarian values (Berry, 1997). This betrayal came, he says, with the migratory careerism of educators: “One’s career is a vehicle, not a dwelling; one is concerned less for where it is than for where it will go” (p. 148). “Their work,” he concludes, “inevitably serves whatever power is greatest. That power at present is the industrial economy, of which ‘agribusiness’ is a part” (p. 156). I am not saying Berry has no bias of his own (see, for example, “The Problem of Tobacco” in Sex, Economy, Freedom, and Community, 1993), only that he is not a hired “Yes-Man” for industry. Therefore, of his writing, he says,

As I understand [publishing], I am being paid only for my work in arranging the words; my property is that arrangement. The thoughts in this book, on the contrary, are not mine. They came freely to me, and I give them freely away. I have no “intellectual property,” and I think that all claimants to such property are thieves. . . .

. . . I would like to be agreed with, of course, but the rules of publication require me to be willing also to be disagreed with, to be ignored, and even to be disliked. Those who are moved by this book to disagreement or dislike will take discomfort, I hope, from hearing that some of my readers treat me kindly . . .

But kindness is not—is never—the same as complete agreement. An essayist not only has no right to expect complete agreement but has a certain responsibility to ward it off. If you tell me, dear reader, that you agree with me completely, then I must suspect one or both of us of dishonesty. I must reserve the right, after all, to disagree with myself. (Berry, 1993, pp. xvii, xix)

From the perspective of his work as an ordinary farmer who also influences others in writing books for publication, Berry illustrates that he is (in Mills’s words) one who
does not see himself as some autonomous being standing 'outside society.' In common with most other people, he does feel that he stands outside the major history-making decisions of this period; at the same time he knows that he is among those who take many of the consequences of these decisions. . . . By his activities in these milieux, he is often in no better position than the ordinary individual to solve structural problems, for their solution can never be merely intellectual or merely private. . . . But . . . [Berry] is not only an 'ordinary man.' It is his very task intellectually to transcend the milieux in which he happens to live, and this he does when he considers the economic order of [his time]. (Mills, 1959, p. 184)

All this begs the question: What is Berry giving to his readers? As a Millsian "intellectual craftsman," what is he shaping for his readers? What is he planting within our minds?

**Wendell Berry's Coherent Contribution: Moral Ideology**

As I worked to unearth, codify, and list Berry's values, I began to feel there was something flawed with my approach. While identifying his "95 Theses" is possible and will have a place in this study, I have come to sense that doing so devoid of a broader classification is flimsy. What is Berry giving us? The word "ideology" came to mind. In her book devoted to an analysis of Berry's contribution to the agrarian tradition, Kimberly Smith (2003) says,

An actor's ideology shapes her perception of what the problem [emphasis added] is (is it poverty, environmental degradation, loss of community?) and what courses of action [emphasis added] are possible (legislation, moral reform, community activism?). Thus the shape and direction of a political or social movement may be determined in part by the ideology the actors bring to the movement. Berry’s ideas, I would argue, contribute to the contemporary environmental movement in both respects. (p. 8)

But then, backing off, Smith tells her readers that she will "seldom refer to 'ideology,' which carries connotations I'd like to avoid" (p. 8). She says, "I rely instead on the concept of intellectual tradition" (p. 8).
The connotations she wants to avoid, most likely, are the connections to Marxism. Marx uses the concept of "ideology" disapprovingly, to describe "a picture of the world from the point of view of a ruling class" (Jary & Jary, 1991, p. 226). In other words, Marx saw an ideology as embodying what is wrong with the notions and actions of social oppressors. In this sense, Berry is like Marx since much of his work is to critique the industrial ideology which he understands as unjust in its motivations and methods. But this does not yet describe what Berry offers in a positive way.

Mannheim (1985) uses the term "utopian" to describe that which is in contrast to the prevalent ideology. He says, "A state of mind is utopian when it is incongruous with the state of reality within which it occurs" (p. 192). This defines Berry whose agrarian values are incongruous with the prevalent industrial values of the postmodern era. But Mannheim adds,

This incongruence is always evident in the fact that such a state of mind in experience, in thought, and in practice is oriented towards objects which do not exist in the actual situation. . . . Only those orientations transcending reality will be referred to by us as utopian which, when they pass over into conduct, tend to shatter, either partially or wholly, the order of things prevailing at the time. (p. 192)

By this definition, Berry is not utopian in two ways:

1. Although in his Port William stories in particular he is defining a fictional community, he is defining a way of life that is real. He says,

I think agricultural economists could find small farmers who have prospered, not by ‘getting big,’ but by practicing the ancient rules of thrift and subsistence, by accepting the limits of their small farms, and by knowing well the value of having a little land. (Berry, 2003, p. 148)

Yet, in part, this valuing exists because somewhere back in the history of [the Agrarian’s] consciousness is the memory of being landless. . . . If you have no land you have nothing: no food, no
shelter, no warmth, no freedom, no life. . . People who have been landless know that the land is invaluable; it is worth everything. (p. 148)

That healthy agricultural communities have necessarily existed, is not to imply that they would have ever been totally moral or perfectly functional.

2. Berry’s account of 100 years in Port William is anything but pristine. In _A World Lost_ (Berry, 2002), Andy Catlett says of his father Wheeler’s dream: “It was a dream bound to sustain damage and to cause pain, and yet he never gave it up, and he passed it on. He dreamed, simply, of a world intact, the family together, the place cared for, and all well” (p. 269).

It could be argued that since Berry so often refers to the ideas of a home economy or a local economy or a forest economy as contrasted with an industrial economy or a global economy or a colonial economy, he is presenting an economic philosophy. This is problematic, though, since in modern parlance, economics is thought of in light of monetary issues. To call him an economic philosopher, like such as Smith (1991) or Milton Friedman (1982) or John Maynard Keynes (1997), would limit the scope and deeper concern of Berry’s writings. For Berry (1987) an economy (literally, “management of a household”) “includes principles and patterns by which values or power or necessities are parceled out and exchanged” (p. 57). He says, “The right economy is right insofar as it respects the source, respects the power of the source to resurge, and does not ask too much” (1987, p. 134). Berry certainly is an economist, but his paradigm for being so is far afield from those of the thinkers listed above.

Berry’s voice may be described as that of a “social visionary.” In fact, Berry does address many issues of social concern such as kinship, religion, the environment, work, and power. Moreover, this would fit my interest in describing Berry’s sociological
imagination. But Berry would not be satisfied with a well-run social order. Because he traces problems and solutions back to the matter of character, an effective society—devoid of moral character—is not embodied by free people but has simply become the largest possible machine.

What about worldview? Michael Boylan (2000) says “all people must develop a single, comprehensive and internally coherent worldview that is good and that we strive to act out in our daily lives” (p. 27). This is helpful, and Berry, the thoughtful pragmatist, would concur. But since the concept of worldview has been used in so many contexts, I do not think it is strong enough to communicate the nature of Berry’s contribution.

I have settled on this: Berry is presenting his readers with a moral ideology. The baggage of the word ideology aside, I think this is a term that can contain Boylan’s (2000) idea of a comprehensive, internally consistent worldview. It indicates thoughtfulness and coherence. That it is moral is Berry’s primary concern. Berry is not hopeful that institutions with industrial values will change. But he is hopeful that individuals can make responsible moral choices based on value, flowing from virtuous character.

K. Bruce Miller (1971) says that “a moral ideology is prescriptive as well as descriptive; consequently it must imply a coherent process from what is to what ought to be” (p. 71). Berry does this. Miller says that a moral ideology must be “volitionally consistent with moral principles and attitudes that all men of good will would hold” (p. 71). This is true of Berry’s thought, though he would certainly have opposition among those for whom profit has greater value than principle. In Berry’s moral ideology,
decision is “inescapable” (Miller, 1971, p. 72), it is a “philosophy of action” (p. 74), and it calls for individual change prior to group or societal change (p. 76).

Furthermore, the moral values of a moral ideology bridge the inappropriate academic gap that guls the worlds of sociology and philosophy. Philosophers such as Plato (1992), who brings a social concern, and sociologists, such as Durkheim (R. T. Hall, 1987) and Mills (1959) who bring a moral concern, agree: Good people are the makings of the good society. The books Habits of the Heart (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swindler, & Tipton, 1985) and The Good Society (Bellah et al., 1991) illustrate the interplay between individual character and the makings of a good society. As these authors wonder what is missing in the American view of society, they conclude that it is the idea that in our life with other people we are engaged continuously, through words and actions, in creating and re-creating the institutions that make that life possible. This process is never neutral but is always ethical and political, since institutions (even such an intimate institution as the family) live and die by ideas of right and wrong and conceptions of the good. Conversely, while we in concert with others create institutions, they also create us: they educate us and form us...

(Bellah et al., 1991, pp. 11, 12)

So, a moral ideology of use for any good society is gushing with “ideas of right and wrong and conceptions of the good” (Bellah et al., 1991, pp. 11, 12). In other words, it is value-rich.

In describing the elements of “the good life,” Kekes (1995) describes values as “benefits and harms, whose possession makes a life better than it would be without them and whose infliction makes a life worse than it would otherwise be” (p. 19). “The idea behind primary values,” says Kekes, “is that human nature dictates that some things will normally benefit all human beings and, similarly, that some things will normally harm everyone” (p. 19). These benefits (primary goods) are universal whereas secondary
values are variable and open to local and historic interpretations. Primary goods “are universally good because it is good for all human beings to have the capacity to satisfy” (p. 21). He says these goods are “the goods of self” as well as “the goods of intimacy,” and that which is “good for all of us to live in the kind of society in which the enjoyment of these goods is not only possible but also welcome thus to have ‘the goods of social order’” (p. 21). The truly good life is moral, and morality is social. Goodness is not merely personal and relative, but relationally, culturally, and generationally transmitted, making a tangible contribution to a healthy economy.

**Placing Berry Within Historic Ethical Theory**

Regarding the matter of morality, a note is necessary here to clarify Berry’s placement within historic ethical theory. In the following notes, I will be very brief in view of the massive material on this subject, and comment chronologically on just four of the most prominent theories and their most prominent spokespersons. (In chapter 7, I draw a more explicit connection between Berry’s moral values and leadership. I will just introduce the subject here.) Below I use a subject → action → object taxonomy to describe where each theory places it emphasis.

Aristotle’s (384-322 BC) theory (1952) is known as eudaimonistic (coming from the Greek word for “happiness”) and though it has several versions “on the contemporary scene, what is now called ‘virtue theory’ is in the same tradition” (Kekes, 1995, p. 2). The main idea is: What kind of person do I want to be? The ultimate ethical question is: What qualities do I want to characterize me? Aristotle discussed the good person, who habitually displayed evidence of a good life. These habits, called virtues (or excellences), reflected a person’s moral integrity and resulted in a state of personal happiness. In the
subject→action→object taxonomy, the focus for eudaimonism is the subject, the moral actor. (Hedonism is one version of eudaimonism, as are Epicureanism and Stoicism.) Kimberly Smith (2003) places Berry within this tradition (pp. 116-120).

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) reacted to the division that existed in his day between empiricism and rationalism (Kant, 1952). He sought to bring these worlds together in an attempt to not compromise either of them. His “categorical imperative” was an ethical principle suggesting one “act only on that maxim whereby thou canst at the same time will that it should become a universal law” (Stockhammer, 1972, p. 29). For Kant, the ethical focus is on the action. The question is: “Is this an action that is required of me and would it also be required of everyone?”

John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) was a student of Utilitarianism’s first spokesman, Jeremy Bentham. As a voice for Utilitarians, Mill (1952) said that an act is right or good if it results in happiness. While for Bentham this had somewhat of a hedonistic application, Mill (and John Dewey) meant the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people. For Mill, only an action that resulted in a good end could be considered good. In other words, the object of the action was the point of fundamental concern.

John Rawls (1921-2002) wrote within the social contract tradition of Locke and Rousseau. His theory (Rawls, 1999) was built around a concern for social fairness. Justice, which necessarily defines goodness as a concern for social equality, has both civil and economic applications. Liberty for all is to be economic well-being for all. For Rawls, this is the work of society. Rawls focus, like Mills’s is on the object – goodness is for the good of everyone within society. Western economic theory is grounded mainly upon utilitarianism and social contract theory.
What Berry has going for him is that he is not trying to fit himself into or under one theory or another. He is simply explaining the obligation he believes is the duty for everyone: “The care of the earth is our most ancient and most worthy and, after all, our most pleasing responsibility. To cherish what remains of it, and to foster its renewal, is our only legitimate hope” (Berry, 1997, p. 14). In these words most of the elements from all four historical ethical theories exist.

As with Kant, Berry identifies a duty—a moral value—that ought to be carried out by all. This value implies an additional set of preferred values that are necessary for a flourishing, happy life, as per Aristotle or a pleasing life, as per Berry. They are necessary for the individual, yet not so much as the stereotypic rugged individualist, but as a member of the community. That sometimes means an individual’s preference must be surrendered in order to achieve justice for all, as in Rawls. The conviction that the existence of healthy land is a duty stewarded to all has the built-in hope that the effort will result in sustainable harvests. The utilitarian end, for Berry, is food and next season, more food to the “seventh generation” (Berry, 1995, p. 44; Newton, 2003). This is a duty, therefore, with a built-in utility. It is a duty, an obligation by itself, to care for the earth, and this primary duty, this moral imperative, includes a subset of duties, values, and preferences. The virtuous person is the one most likely to invest effort and experience enjoyment in this kind of morality.

As shown in Figure 5, all values are subjectively interpreted and therefore fall somewhere on a spectrum from a value that is a moral duty and highly moral, to a value that is neither morally necessary nor preferred at all.
Figure 5. A duty-preference continuum of values.

For example, Berry would place agrarian values very near to the far left, while a committed industrialist, for example, is likely to rank such values at the other end of the spectrum. If the corporate leader places “making a profit” somewhere near a moral duty, as Friedman (1982) and others do, Berry would—at best—find this to be moderately preferable. What is more, no moral duty can be best fulfilled without certain corroborating virtues. The virtue—subjectively defined as well—may be care or competitiveness; generosity or greed. Either way, the value will be carried out with others in mutual commitment to an agreed upon obligation, the “social contract,” if you will.

The good life is not, Berry shows, effortless, independent of camaraderie, nor does it always result in fully satisfying ends. (For example, a flood may wipe out the crop or the harvest may not come to the extent that was hoped for.) In fact, the means of effort and dependence may involve pleasure, even if the end is more realistic than romantic. Yet realistic ends, approached from virtue, allow that the duty was faithfully fulfilled.

The Audience for Wendell Berry’s Moral Ideology

Before pressing into my intent to allow Berry’s values to speak into the life and work of leaders, a word needs to be said about how he will say what to whom. C. Wright

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Mills would hope the sociologists to whom he writes would direct their “work at kings as well as to ‘publics’” (1959, p. 181). Wendell Berry, however, does not speak to leaders directly. Nevertheless, his writings will have direct use for leaders involved in the production and distribution of food. This includes farmers, agribusiness folks, farm technology organizations, the government’s Department of Agriculture, and the like. Those who do any kind of work that has environmental concerns in the source of their materials, manufacturing procedures, and product impact will also find relevant insight in Berry’s work. Moreover, anyone whose leadership is in the realm of buying and selling in the marketplace will find counsel here. Finally, Wendell Berry has scattered comments in his writings to leaders in politics, law, medicine, religion (Christianity, in particular), science/technology, and the conservation/environmental movements.

However, it does not take long in reading Berry to sense that he is not hopeful about those in positional leadership within our society. Therefore, his words are most explicitly directed at “publics,” at ordinary people, individuals in today’s communities, especially rural ones.

To those who are regularly without such power and whose awareness is confined to their everyday milieux, he [the social critic] reveals by his work the meaning of structural trends and decisions for these milieux, the ways in which personal troubles are connected with public issues; in the course of these efforts, he states what he has found out concerning the actions of the more powerful. (Mills, 1959, p. 185)

Berry is bringing eye-opening critique on the value upheaval that exists around all of us and calling individuals to make a choice to live in responsible ways in light of the understanding that he imparts. This being the case, all those in formal and informal leadership relationships can hear Berry’s voice speak into their context. The authors of *The Ascent of a Leader* (Thrall, McNicol, & McElrath, 1999) say,
To remain teachable, leaders can let go of their pride and let the other ordinary people around them provide input into their lives and decisions. Protection and direction come from listening, hearing, and aligning with the truth others have to tell us. (p. 154)

Although I do not think they are particularly talking about “listening” to authors, their exhortation applies. J. Robert Clinton (1988) is talking about the role of books when he says of his research in leadership emergence: “I began to look for . . . vicarious learning in the lives of [the leaders I was studying]. Many great leaders were widely read and greatly helped by the experiences of others recorded in biographies and other works” (p. 140). It is under this premise that my task is to (a) isolate Berry’s general values and (b) (where appropriate in the context of Berry’s writings) to recast any specific insights he gives as general principles.

Conclusion

It is uncanny how precisely Berry’s essays make application of the sociological imagination. I have no way of knowing if Berry has read Mills or is aware of him. Yet, he has Mills’s basic thinking locked into his practice as a thinker and writer. Furthermore, he has even more going for him than Mills, in that—from the perspective of environmental sociology—he sees the land and our ecosystems as making a contribution to social well-being.

By now it also comes clear that Berry’s is a moral agenda. He joins Socrates and a long line of moral theorists who ask: How shall we then live? He answers by introducing us to a healthy society (in his fiction), giving us short installments of a moral argument (in his essays), and offering us what Mills might call “sociological poetry.” Mills (2000) describes this as “a style of experience and expression that reports social
facts and at the same time reveals their human meanings. . . . Success would be a sociological poem which contains the full human meaning in statements of apparent fact” (p. 112). In Berry, social perspectives make sense because he thinks philosophically, and good philosophy is never to be isolated from its social and natural implications.

In the chapter 4, I turn to Berry’s values. To do him justice, I will clearly state his primary moral value, that is, his categorical imperative. After some discussion, I will then explicate the secondary values that Berry understands to support the primary one. Again, these values speak most explicitly to those working in agricultural contexts, but will—as I show in these pages—have broader implications than land-use alone.
CHAPTER 4

BERRY SPEAKS, PART 2: HIS PRIMARY
AND SECONDARY VALUES

It is now time to catalog Wendell Berry’s system of values. I am seeking to classify Wendell Berry’s preferred convictions regarding valuable entities, practices, and ends. I am interested in identifying the reflective outworkings of his agrarian worldview. I want to find and apply the values that guide and discipline his behavioral choices and that he believes will result in a properly functioning society that is good and successful. Berry’s values are morally grounded and clarify his idea of the good life and the makings of a good common life.

Though he uses poetic, narrative, and polemic literary genres, it is his essays, the most didactic of the three, which most clearly reveal his value system. Each genre serves a purpose, however. Kimberly Smith (2003) suggests that “we read Berry’s novels and essays as offering contextual justifications for his moral and social theories” (p. 122). She says that his Port William novels in which people do adopt and act on these values, demonstrate his point; they advocate his particular conceptions of human nature and the good life by showing us what the world might look like if such conceptions held sway. (p. 123)

Stories tend to free our minds from debate by taking us into a distant place where we are free to thoughtfully observe the moral and social patterns of the characters. They help us
to see life differently and to subconsciously evaluate our own life in light of what we are seeing.

"The larger issues of our time," says Hyatt Howe Waggoner (1950), "are clearly discernible in the work of our poets" (p. 214). This is true of Wendell Berry. But not only does Berry write poetry, he also writes about poetry. As a poetry novice, I have learned much from Berry and I have found that his poetic philosophy is shared by others.

Poets, says Waggoner,

listen for the sounding heel of Elohim, hoping that it might tell them which are the good, the right, the preferable value-objects. . . . Having found that experience is instinct with value, the poets begin to talk in semantic blurbs, begin to search for a supreme and unifying set of values. (pp. 13, 14)

They have “fallen back on what seems almost always to have been poetry’s chief resource, a use of language which, though it is both referential and emotive, is not principally either, but intuitive or evocative” (p. 196).

So his essays are clear about his values. They are logical, persuasive, and well-written. But his stories and his poems reinforce what Berry wants his readers to understand. In part, I have sought validation of my opinions from scholars who have written books and articles about Berry.

As I have already noted, I rely on the credibility of a field known as the sociology of literature which, though it has been around for over 100 years (for example, George Lukacs and Karl Marx), came to popularity in Europe in the late 1960s and 70s (Escarpit, 1971; Goldman, 1975, 1976; J. Hall, 1979; Laurenson, 1978; Laurenson & Swingewood, 1972; Leenhardt, 1967; Pospelov, 1967; Ramsey, 1973; Wilson, 1979). Admittedly, a methodology has not been settled on within the field. Among sociologists of literature, there are two ways of understanding what the sociology of literature actually is: One
approach looks at the field of publishing (authors, publishing houses, the human society) and considers all the socio-dynamics that go into putting a book in the public’s hands.

The other approach, more consistent with my interests here, is to allow books to be vehicles for social understanding. Here, too, there is disagreement. Some suggest that the text and its structure stand alone in the analysis, while others believe that the author’s background and intentions necessarily affect any sociological understanding. I follow this latter assumption, knowing that Berry has intentionally placed himself in his works as a writer. Janet Goodrich (2001) has written a book-length work that suggests whether his chosen form be the novel, the essay, the short story or the poem, Wendell Berry writes as an autobiographer who imaginatively shapes his experience into literary artifice. In his essays, Berry reconstructs events and relationships that recur in his fiction and poetry. He writes these ongoing re-creations of his own life through the different vocations that together comprise his being. He is, like most of us, not one voice but a medley of coexisting voices narrating the creation of a self. This complexity of perspective enables Berry to write and rewrite his experience in ways that allow him to connect with a diverse readership. (p. 2)

**Wendell Berry’s Value-Based Moral Ideology**

James Hans (1990) notes, “If we have any hope of doing full justice to the work of our writers, we must address the ways in which their work shapes the values through which we read them and through which we construe our lives” (p. 15). Furthermore, I come to Berry, concurring with Paul Ramsey (1973), that “the student of society and the student of literature share a three-fold motive: (1) they seek truth as such; (2) they seek truths of value, truth-in-value; (3) they wish to do good, to improve society and literature” (p. 23). Others are less enthusiastic, but nevertheless resigned to issues of good and bad in literature: “In literature as in life, morality is sometimes annoying, but it is never quite so annoying as immorality” (Wagerknecht, 1935, p. 45).
Berry’s Primary Value

Miller (1971) says that “the world-view of a moral ideology must have a clear and single-minded goal which leads toward a noble kind of social unity” (p. 70). What, then, is Berry’s single-minded goal? At the conclusion of one of his longest essays, “Discipline and Hope” Berry (1972), states it this way: “What I have been preparing at such length to say is that there is only one value: the life and health of the world” (p. 164). One might wonder about the many other issues to be concerned about, to which Berry replies, “Moral, practical, spiritual, esthetic, economic, and ecological values are all concerned ultimately with the same question of life and health” (p. 164). That he offers a moral ideology, consistent with Miller’s description, is clear: “Moral value, as should be obvious, is not separable from other values. An adequate morality would be ecologically sound; it would be esthetically pleasing. But the point I want to stress here is that it would be practical” (p. 165).

While this primary value of health and life is practical, it is also blooming with secondary preferred convictions regarding entities, practices, and ends that are essentially valuable. As his primary value, he is concerned that our society would affirm the centrality of healthy agricultural communities and those who serve as its stewards (Berry, 1997, p. 44). But under this practical concern, he further builds his moral argument, especially in the early pages of *The Unsettling of America* (1997). Table 4 highlights Berry’s argument in contrast to prevailing thinking.

All of this helps us understand what Berry (1997) means by “healthy.” For in this idea, he gives his definition of success.

By health we [usually] mean little more than how we feel. . . . By health, in other words, we [as a culture] mean merely the absence of disease. . . . But the concept of
Table 4

Berry's (1997) Contrasts Between Healthy Agriculture Communities and the Opposing Characteristics of Industrial Agriculture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>In Favor of Healthy Agricultural Communities and Those who Serve as its Stewards</strong></th>
<th><strong>In Opposition to Healthy Agricultural Communities and Those who Serve as its Stewards</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The land is shared and worked by many who are bound to it (p. 13)</td>
<td>Fewer and fewer own more and more land that only a few work on (p. 45) (economy of size—p. 36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An economy of necessities (p. 14)</td>
<td>An economy based on anxiety, fantasy, luxury, and idle wishing (p. 14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requires intimate knowledge of the place (p. 31)</td>
<td>Applies generalized knowledge of the place (p. 31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Producers are also consumers; the farm is connected to the household (pp. 31, 32). There is an integration of home and work (p. 53)</td>
<td>Consumers consume only; a merchant exists between farm and household (pp. 31,32). The modern-industrialized home is divided and fragmented from the sources of life (p. 51ff.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer = independent worker, loyal to place, takes pride in his work, works in response to necessity, interest, obligation. Works in intricate formal patterns, ordering his work within overlapping cycles: human/natural; controllable/uncontrollable life of the farm (p. 44). Attention given to husbandry, agricultural responsibility (p. 45)</td>
<td>Farmer = someone with business sense and the managerial ability to handle the large acreages necessary to finance large machines (pp. 33, 34, 45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agripower is measured by the fertility/health of the soil the healthy, wisdom, thrift, and stewardship of the farming community (p. 35)</td>
<td>Agripower is measured by production of marketable surplus, and thus, spending power (p. 35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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health is rooted in the concept of wholeness. To be healthy is to be whole. . . . But how can it be whole and yet be dependent, as it is obviously is, upon other bodies and upon the earth, upon all the rest of creation, in fact? . . . In that, all the convergences and dependences of creation are surely implied. . . . Persons cannot be whole alone. It is wrong to think that bodily health is compatible with spiritual confusion or cultural disorder, or with polluted air and water or impoverished soil. (Berry, 1997, p. 103)

Only by restoring the broken connections can we be healed. Connection is health. . . . We lose our health—and create profitable diseases and dependences—by failing to see the direct connections between living and eating, eating and working, working and loving. (p. 138)

The success of the individual (and perhaps I can raise the awareness here for the individual leader, specifically) is not limited to increased profit, production that is merely quantifiable, expansion, positional advancement, and faster and more efficient productivity. Success, for Berry, is stewarding the appropriate dependencies within creation. By implication, competition and exploitation are marks of failure and the antithesis of interdependence and nurture, which are marks of success.

Berry is unwavering as to his primary value. In his latest books of essays (2003a), Berry has this to say about his work 25 years after the publishing of The Unsettling of America:

To be an agrarian writer in such a time is an odd experience. One keeps writing essays and speeches that one would prefer not to write, that one wishes would prove unnecessary, that one hopes nobody will have any need for in twenty-five years. My life as an agrarian writer has certainly involved me in such confusions, but I have never doubted for a minute the importance of the hope I have tried to serve: the hope that we might become healthy people in a healthy land. (p. 143)

Berry’s Secondary Values

Berry (2000b) states his primary value by having his readers suppose: “Suppose that the ultimate standard of our work were to be, not professionalism and profitability,
but the health and durability of human and natural communities" (p. 134). His supposition defines his primary value, which in Keke’s (1995) definition, dictates something that counts as a benefit for “all reasonable conceptions of a good life” and “will normally benefit all human beings” (p. 19). What follows are Berry’s secondary values. Such values are variable in the sense that they fall under a unified conception of the good life (Keke, 1995, p. 19), in this case, Berry’s agrarianism. Once the primary value becomes an uncompromised conviction, the secondary values will provide the guidance toward disciplined behavioral choices.

The values I am about to list emerge from Berry’s context of concern. He is writing primarily with a concern for the well-being of his household and land and his local community. But he knows that these reside upon the land of Kentucky and in the U.S. and within the political and legal arrangements of state and national governments. These concerns, therefore, are also his concerns, and justifiably, the concerns of all.

“Berry’s regionalism is not eccentric or centrifugal, but centripetal, and therefore tends toward universality” (Hamburger, 1991, p. 82). Specifically, he is perturbed that the primary corporate value—profitability at any cost—is an unquestioned good. He is concerned about exploitation of both agricultural communities and wilderness by strip miners, timber companies, agribusiness corporations, governmental passivity, unthoughtful farmers, vacationers, other-worldly religious teachings, military action, even conservation groups, and the broad-based complicity by almost all of our citizenry.

What is the nature of this exploitation in contrast with the agrarian way? In Berry’s (1997) own words:

I conceive a strip-miner to be a model exploiter, and as a model nurturer I take the old-fashioned idea or ideal of a farmer. The exploiter is a specialist, an expert; the

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nurturer is not. The standard of the exploiter is efficiency; the standard of the nurturer is care. The exploiter’s goal is money, profit; the nurturer’s goal is health—his land’s health, his own, his family’s, his community’s, his country’s. Whereas the exploiter asks of a piece of land only how much and how quickly it can be made to produce, the nurturer asks a question that is much more complex and difficult: What is its carrying capacity? (That is: How much can be taken from it without diminishing it? What can it produce dependably for an indefinite time?) The exploiter wishes to earn as much as possible by as little work as possible; the nurturer expects, certainly, to have a decent living from his work, but his characteristic wish is to work as well as possible. The competence of the exploiter is in organization; that of the nurturer is in order—a human order, that is, that accommodates itself both to other order and to mystery. The exploiter typically serves an institution or organization; the nurturer serves land, household, community, place. The exploiter thinks in terms of numbers, quantities, “hard facts”; the nurturer in terms of character, condition, quality, kind. (pp. 7, 8)

Two additional notes prepare us for the list. First, it must be noted that Berry is a critic of “experts” who bring their advice out of context from a local place. He expresses his concern well in saying,

The good farmer’s mind, as I understand it, is in a certain critical sense beyond the reach of textbooks and expert advice . . . what he proposes must be found to be generally true. For the good farmer . . . the place where knowledge is applied is minutely particular, not a farm but this farm, my farm, the only place exactly like itself in all the world. (Berry, 1984, p. 28)

It is possible, therefore, that my intention to present him to leaders as a wisdom-giver may violate his own antagonism for one-size-fits-all solutions that do not emerge from contextual familiarity. Second, Berry’s values are not easily partitioned and I suspect that in doing so he may disapprove. In fact, the careful reader of Berry will soon see that each value refuses to be discussed without entering the content of another value. They work together as a cohesive moral ideology, as I have said.

It is Berry’s own writing that has permitted me to live within these two tensions. He does offer advice in the very writing of his books and though he concedes his context, he makes no apology as to the usefulness of his insights for the well-being of the nation,
even the world. What is more, in an occasional essay he will break down and give a list of distinguishable, though interrelated, principles. With these disclaimers behind me, I proceed with the list.

1. Each place is unique and worthwhile.
2. Everything is connected.
3. Physical work, done well, is meaningful and pleasurable.
4. Nature is a place of mystery, instruction, perspective, and power.
5. A functional home economy provides independence.
6. Neighborly interdependence is a sustaining practice.
7. Regional history, tradition, and memory are very important.
8. Language must be appropriately used as a way to describe, discuss, and work accountably within reality.
9. Limits exist.
10. Education is the preparation of a person who will be good for the world.
11. A good epistemology is a multi-sourced critical realism

Each Place is Unique and Worthwhile

“Our house stands on a slope overlooking the Kentucky River a few miles from its entrance into the Ohio at Carrollton” (Berry, 2004a, p. 32). The subject of Berry’s writing is the land he loves, farms, and lives on. “I now live in my subject. My subject is my place in the world, and I live in my place” (Berry, 1990b, p. 6). He writes thick descriptions of natural places, built places—such as a barn—and places in ruin, a strip-mined mountain, for example. He writes in careful detail, describing not objects alone but processes too. He writes with awe to encourage awe and to train readers to see
Creation more intimately. There is evident affection in his words, especially when he is describing his own surroundings. In 1966 he wrote,

Knowing this valley, once one has started to know it, is clearly no casual matter. Like all country places, it is both complex and reticent. It cannot be understood by passing through. . . . Its wonders are commonplace and shy. Knowing them is an endless labor, and, if one can willingly expand the labor, an endless pleasure.

I am not sure how one would judge a valley or compare it to any other. I guess that this one must be as attractive as most. To me, because I have been its inhabitant and intimate, it is the most attractive of all. I know that among all the other lives it holds and promises there is the possibility of rich hours and days and lives for people.

I have known this valley all my life. From the first it has been a source of pleasure to me, an object of interest and curiosity, an attraction. Every day I am here I learn more about it, and the more I learn the more clearly I see that my knowledge of it is one of its fragments. (2004a, p. 34)

In *The Gift of Good Land* (1981), Berry reports on a farm tour that he took beyond his own place. ("I . . . never find it easy to leave home," says he [p. 3].) He reports on what he saw of agriculture in Peru and among native farmers in Arizona. He takes us with him to strip-mined land being "reclaimed" by Wallace Aikens, and to Elmer Lapp’s place where we learn what is there, what happens there, and the way people are there. "The Lapps are just completing a small barn that is a good example of the care and the sense of order that have gone into the making of their farm" (p. 224).

His essay in that same collection, called "Seven Amish Farms" (Berry, 1981), describes a cultural way of being and farming that has been ignored (at best) and even disparaged. Berry shows the economic potential of well-managed farms farmed by well-managed people, saying, "These little Amish farms . . . become the measure both of ‘conventional’ American agriculture and of the cultural meaning of the national industrial economy" (p. 257). In other words, these places, unlike most farms that function according to industry standards, are profitable, healthy, and sustainable across generations. Here, like in many of his essays, Berry talks about things like humus, alfalfa,
cow manure, and mare urine. But all this contributes toward helping us to see the caring stewardship of healthy places.

In his recollections of Harlan Hubbard, Berry (1990a) tells how he first happened upon the Hubbard’s riverfront settlement on a canoe trip down the Ohio River. It was near the same time that Berry and Tanya had chosen to create a settlement of their own on a Kentucky hill farm. He had begun to wonder how to build a long history of care in his new place.

What the Hubbards had done there was done in full respect for the place’s essential dignity and integrity. . . . When he and Anna settled at Payne Hollow, they were motivated . . . by a particular knowledge of the place they settled in and a particular love for it. . . . They could not have wished to make their life a belittlement of the place they loved, and they did not. (pp. 88, 89)

Everything Is Connected

At his granddaughter’s high-school graduation, Berry (2003b) told the graduates:

Newspaper editorials deplore such human-caused degradations of the oceans as the Gulf of Mexico’s “dead zone,” and reporters describe practices like “mountain removal” mining in eastern Kentucky. Some day we may finally understand the connections.

The health of the oceans depends on the health of rivers; the health of rivers depends on the health of small streams; the health of small streams depends on the health of their watersheds. The health of the water is exactly the same as the health of the land; the health of small places is exactly the same as the health of large places. As we know, disease is hard to confine. Because natural law is in force everywhere, infections move. (1, 2)

What Berry says here about the connection that exists among waters and land is a metaphor for his larger concern about the danger of inappropriate division:

1. Solutions to agricultural problems are connected to other problems. In “Solving for Pattern” Berry (1981) says, “A bad solution is bad, then, because it acts destructively upon the larger patterns in which it is contained” (p. 137). He illustrates, “A bad solution
solves for a single purpose or goal, such as increased production. And it is typical of such solutions that they achieve stupendous increases in production at exorbitant biological and social costs” (p. 137). In contrast, “A good solution is good because it is in harmony with those larger patterns . . . the way a healthy organ acts within the body” (pp. 137, 138).

2. The causes of social problems are connected to each other. Without demeaning the concern for civil rights, the cry for peace, or the environmental crisis, Berry (1972) is critical of establishing “movements” as an approach to solving social issues. His comments on this matter are many, but consider one illustration in this discussion of connectivity: “I believe that the separation of these three problems is artificial. They have the same cause, and that is the mentality of greed and exploitation” (p. 72). He explains how this could be so and says, “We would be fools to believe that we could solve any one of these problems without solving the others” (p. 73).

3. Personal problems are connected to agricultural issues. An early essay from The Nation (Berry, 2004a) describes a skilled furniture maker. He is an industrious, capable, craftsman. And yet his circumstances are desperate. Why? Berry’s belief is that “if his troubles are not typical of the region, they are nevertheless indigenous to it, and are peculiarly revealing of the region’s troubles” (p. 7). And here, Berry sums up his belief about many problems of poverty, race, and urban difficulties: “His fate cannot be separated from the fate of his land” (p. 7).

Perhaps the most important concern for Berry related to connectivity, stated in the positive, is that we live within a set of interlocking systems. He says,

"I come more and more to look on each creature as living and moving always at the center—one of the infinite number of centers—of an arrangement of processes that..."
reaches through the universe. The interlocking lives of the creatures, like a coat of chain mail, by which the creation saves itself from death. (Berry, 1972, p. 49)

The visible system that is outermost is nature: “Wilderness is the element in which we live encased in civilization, as a mollusk lives in his shell in the sea” (Berry, 1991, p. 37).

He explains further,

The definitive relationships in the universe are thus not competitive but interdependent. And from a human point of view they are analogical. We can build one system only within another. We can have agriculture only within nature, and culture only within agriculture. At certain points these systems have to conform with one another or destroy one another. (Berry, 1986, p. 47)

He offers the picture of “a system of nested systems: the individual human within the family within the community within agriculture within nature.” The picture looks like this:

![Figure 6. The nested system of systems.](image-url)
Berry (1983) explains,

So long as the smaller systems are enclosed within the larger, and so long as all are connected by complex patterns of interdependency, as we know they are, then whatever affects one system will affect the others.

It seems that this system of systems is safe so long as each system is controlled by the next larger one. If at any point the hierarchy is reversed, and the smaller begins to control the larger, then the destruction of the entire system of systems begins. (p. 46)

To bring this to everyone's reality, Berry (2003a) explains,

In a national and increasingly international industrial economy, the land-dependent people who do the actual work of production are served last; their places and communities are served not at all . . . The catch is that this is bad for everybody. Even the richest beneficiaries of the present economy cannot prosper indefinitely in a country, or a world, of devastated landscapes populated by the poor, the exploited, and the unemployed. Finally, the bills will be delivered, and everyone will pay. (p. 138)

For Berry, this includes the fate of those yet unborn as the ones who may have the debt called in their generation. One further connection may transform anthropocentric audacity into religious caution. Following a debate he and his friend Wes Jackson had regarding possible terms for the largest system that encompasses the rest (including the Kingdom of God and the Tao) Berry settles on the "Great Economy" which is "both known and unknown, visible and invisible, comprehensible and mysterious" (Berry, 1987, pp. 56, 57). Everything else, down to our own little economies, exists within this Great One. A simple reminder from experience, about our relationship to soil, proves this.

We can care for it (or not), we can even, as we say "build" it, but we can do so only by assenting to, preserving, and perhaps collaborating in its own processes. To those processes themselves we have nothing to contribute. We cannot make topsoil, and we cannot make any substitute for it . . . (p. 62)
The connections of the interlocking systems are complete, whether acknowledged or not.

“There is no ‘outside’ to the Great Economy, no escape into either specialization or generation, no ‘time off.’ . . . Everything we do counts” (pp. 74, 75).

**Physical Work, Done Well, Is Meaningful and Pleasurable**

Berry (1984) takes pains to offer a definition for work that is counter to the one in popular culture making work a drudgery and something that must be gotten through quickly so one can get on to their entertainment. For Berry, good work contributes toward the improvement of a place in every way. It is the result of a good mind paying attention to where it is. It is mind and body working in tandem. There is a disciplined refusal to surpass one’s limits. To do so would result in overload, the tendency to underestimate the complexity of the task, and a reduction in the level of care available for the work (p. 24).

But the thought of work as drudgery mostly prevails and so with the proliferation of technological innovations, many “labor-saving” devices are being marketed to the consumer. Berry (1972) observes:

In reality, this despised drudgery is one of the constants of life, like water only changing its form in response to changes of atmosphere. Our aversion to the necessary work that we call drudgery and our strenuous efforts to avoid it have not diminished it at all, but only degraded its forms. The so-called drudgery has to be done. (p. 116)

He then proceeds with the following examples:

If one is “too good” to do it for oneself, then it must be done by a servant, or by a machine manufactured by servants. If it is not done at home, then it must be done in a factory, which degrades both the conditions of work and the quality of the product. If it is not done well by the hands of one person, then it must be done poorly by the hands of many. But somewhere the hands of someone must be soiled with the work. (p. 116)
The "labor-saving" machines endorsed by bottom-line economists and corporate technocrats have had further effects in rural farm areas. They have, in fact and intentionally, decreased the farm's need for human hands. As a result, the unemployed country hands take their families to the urban jungle where those same hands are even more unskilled and, therefore are unemployed and possibly unemployable. In the title essay of the book *What Are People For?* Berry (1990b) asks that question and answers,

Is the obsolescence of human beings now our social goal? One would conclude so from our attitude toward work, especially the manual work necessary to the long-term preservation of the land, and our rush toward mechanization, automation, and computerization. In a country that puts an absolute premium on labor-saving measures, short work-days and retirement, why should there be any surprise at permanence of unemployment and welfare dependency? (p. 125)

This is a waste of people. But the waste of non-renewable resources is also affected by our desire to decrease physical effort. Most farmers have given up the "free energy of the sun," or solar energy (which "not only grew the plants, as it still does, but also provided the productive power of farms in the form of the work of humans and animals" [Berry, 1981, p. 130]), "in order to pay dearly for the machine-derived energy of the fossil fuels" (p. 131). The "cures" applied to work result in further "disease": debt, lost energy, loss of care, decrease in quality and, ultimately, poor social and nutritional health. There is a personal loss in the lost value of work as well.

Ultimately, in the argument about work and how it should be done, one has only one's pleasure to offer. It is possible, as I have learned again and again, to be in one's place, in such company, wild or domestic, and with such pleasure, that one cannot think of another place that one would prefer to be—or of any other place at all. One does not miss or regret the past, or fear or long for the future. Being there is simply all, and is enough. Such times give one the chief standard and the chief reason for one's work. (Berry, 1990b, p. 143)
In his Sabbath poem, “1983, III” Berry (1985) tells the tale of a pipe that needed moving to water the fields. After commenting on the agricultural importance of the task, he concludes by saying:

And this
Is Sunday work, necessity
Depriving us of needed rest.
Yet this necessity is less,
Being met, not by one, but three.
Neighbors, we make this need our feast.

(p. 67)

Necessary, but pleasurable and meaningful, too. “At work in a factory, workers are only workers, ‘units of production’ expending ‘man-hours’ at a task set for them by strangers” (Berry, 1981, p. 110). He contrasts this with work in one’s own community, farm, household, or shop where “workers are never only workers, but rather persons, relatives, and neighbors. They work for those they work among and with” (p. 110). Further, their work “is ruled by their own morality, skill, and intelligence” (p. 110). He concedes this may result in loss of organizational efficiency and economies of scale. “But it begins to gain value not so readily quantifiable in the fulfilled humanity of workers” where there will emerge “qualities such as independence, skill, intelligence, judgment, pride, respect, loyalty, love, reverence” (p. 111).

Nature Is a Place of Mystery, Instruction, Perspective, and Power

Wendell Berry’s view of personal existence extends to our smallness and dependence upon the largest natural context of the world. He acknowledges, as he sets up camp deep in Kentucky’s Red River Gorge, “a heavy feeling of melancholy and lonesomeness” (Berry, 1991, p. 33). This comes in part from “severed connections, of
being cut off from all familiar place and of being a stranger where I am. What is happening at home?” (p. 34). But he understands, and explains to us, the benefit that will push through his disorientation:

Nobody knows where I am. I don’t know what is happening to anybody else in the world. . . . It is only beyond this lonesomeness for the places I have come from that I can reach the vital reality of a place such as this. . . . Perhaps the most difficult labor for my species is to accept is limits, its weakness and ignorance . . .

And so, coming here, what I have done is strip away the human façade that usually stands between me and the universe and I see more clearly where I am. . . . Alone here, among the rocks and the trees, I see that I am alone also among the stars. . . .

And so I have come here to enact—not because I want to but because, once here, I cannot help it—the loneliness and the humbleness of my kind. I must see in my flimsy shelter, pitched here for two nights, the transience of capitol and cathedrals. In growing used to being in this place, I will have to accept a humbler and truer view of myself than I usually have. (pp. 36-38)

He understands nature as dynamic and alive, though not going as far as Deep Ecologists like George Sessions and Arne Naess who use the Gaia imagery to describe a living being that is, essentially, not to be touched (Sessions, 1995). (When one interviewer asked Berry about Gaia, he responded, “What you call ‘Gaia.’ I call ‘the creation,’ and I understand it as a harmonious and beautiful whole. I am very happy to honor it” [as cited in Snell, 1992, p. 26].) Even as a conservationist, Berry is critical of this fundamental conservationist premise. In his view, “people cannot live apart from nature . . . and yet, people cannot live in nature without changing it” (Berry, 1987, p. 7). The issue is not if we affect nature, for “humans, like all other creatures, must make a difference; otherwise they cannot live. But unlike other creatures, humans must make a choice as to the kind and scale of the difference they make” (p. 7). Nature, he says, “is not only our source but also our limit and measure” (pp. 8, 9). Berry shares this conviction of nature as measure, or instructor, with Wes Jackson (Filipiak, 2004). They often discuss with each other and write “that we can live only in and from nature, and that
we have, therefore, an inescapable obligation to be nature's students and stewards and to live in harmony with her” (Berry, 1990b, p. 104).

**A Functional Home Economy Provides Independence**

An “economy” is the way in which something is stewarded and, ideally, cared for in such a way that it is not used up, wasted, and devalued. More positively, a home economy is an art, carried out by artists who “know how to gather things into formal arrangements that are intelligible, memorable and lasting. Good forms confer health upon the things that they gather together” (Berry, 2000b, p. 150). To be more specific and simple, “we must learn to live at home, as independently as self-sufficiently as we can” (p. 20).

Berry provides the example of “Nate Shaw” whose name “is the pseudonym of a black farmer born in Alabama in 1885. . . . Because of industry, ambition, and intelligence, he prospered” (Berry, 1990b, p. 17). Berry’s essay of this “Remarkable Man” describes, among other things, his home economy and his life worked out in detail. His ideal was independence, and that carried his mind to fundamentals. He was not a ‘consumer.’ The necessities of life were of no negligible importance to him. Provisioning, with him, was not just a duty, but a source of excitement, a matter of pride. He knew that his hopes depended on a sound domestic economy. He raised a garden, kept a milk cow or two, fed his own meat hogs and so reduced his family’s dependence on the stores. . . . As a consequence, he began ‘to rise up,’ not to ‘the top,’ but to a sufficiency of ability and goods. (p. 27)

Berry comes to the home economy partly in recognition of our current national inability to meet our own basic needs, having “delegated” such roles to corporate proxies. This is of grave concern for Berry. “A person dependent on somebody else for everything from potatoes to opinions may declare that he is a free man, and his
government may issue a certificate granting him his freedom, but he will not be free” (Berry, 1972, p. 130). He goes on, “How can he be free who can do nothing for himself? . . . Men are free precisely to the extent that they are equal to their own needs. The most able are the most free” (p. 130).

But a home economy is just as much about pride, participation, and, again, pleasure as family members work together to make home life good and sustainable. A direct connection to a good home economy, for Berry (1981), is a healthy marriage:

A man and wife who produce from their own small farm or homestead or town lot as much as possible of what they eat, and provide on their own as far as possible for other needs; who therefore have work at home for their children; who therefore have ‘home life’ and all that that implies. Such a couple may contribute immeasurably to the health of the nation, even to its solvency. But they are not good for the nation’s business, for they consume too little. (p. xiii)

In part this is built on Berry’s understanding of man as husband, which, as “an extraordinarily rich metaphor,” says Jack Hicks (1991), illustrates a commitment to multiple marriages: “to wife, family, farm, community, and finally to the cycle of great nature itself” (p. 119). Marriage is not merely about relationship and emotion.

It is also, and as much as anything, a practical circumstance. It is very much under the influence of things and people outside itself; that is, it must make a household, it must make a place for itself in the world and in the community. (Berry, 1972, p. 163)

Berry looks at our consumer culture as the antithesis of his idea. Men have become money-makers and women are positioned as the money-spenders. This divides husband and wife functionally, physically, and in purpose. “Without the household—not just as a unifying ideal, but as a practical circumstance of mutual dependence and obligation, requiring skill, moral discipline and work” says Berry, “husband and wife find it less and less possible to imagine and enact their marriage” (Berry, 1986, p. 117). To state it
positively, "Marriage and the care of the earth are each other's disciplines. Each makes possible the enactment of fidelity toward the other" (p. 132).

Let my marriage be brought to the ground.
Let my love for this woman enrich the earth.
What is its happiness but preparing its place?
What is its monument but a rich field?

(Berry, 1985, pp. 130, 131)

**Neighborly Interdependence Is a Sustaining Practice**

It is not a contradiction, but in fact a beautiful picture of connection, to say that independent home economies are meant to be vitally interdependent within a local neighborhood economy. This is part of "the work of local culture." Berry explains,

A good community ... is a good local economy. It depends on itself for many of its essential needs and is thus shaped, so to speak, from the inside—unlike most modern populations that depend on distant purchases for almost everything and are thus shaped from the outside by the purposes and the influences of salesmen. (Berry, 1990b, p. 158)

This is about neighbors, knowing each other, doing business with one another, and prepared to care for one another. "In a viable neighborhood, neighbors ask themselves what they can do or provide for one another, and they find answers that they and their place can afford" (Berry, 2003a, p. 74). He says that this is "the practice of neighborhood. This practice must be, in part, charitable, but it must also be economic, and the economic part must be equitable; there is significant charity in just prices" (p. 75). Responding to the globalists' accusation that this is "protectionism," Berry replies, "That is exactly what it is. It is protectionism that is just and sound, because it protects local producers and is the best assurance of adequate supplies to local consumers" (p. 75).
This is more than just about such tangibles as food, tools, and financial exchange. It is about such intangibles as education and friendship. In his essay, “Does Community Have Value?” Berry’s friend, Loyce Flood, remembers the neighborhood support and companionship that she and Owen enjoyed when they moved to a farm in Port Royal in the late 1930s (Berry, 1987, pp. 180-182). Here, I would like to quote from Berry’s short story “A Jonquil for Mary Penn,” where the Floods’ story of neighborhood is seen through the fictional Elton and Mary Penn:

The neighborhood opened to Mary and Elton and took them in with a warmth. . . . The men, without asking or being asked, included Elton in whatever they were doing. They told him when and where they needed him. They came to him when he needed them. He was an apt and able hand, and they were glad to have his help. He learned from them all but liked best to work with Walter Cotman, who was a fine farmer. He and Walter were, up to a point, two of a kind; both were impatient of disorder . . . and both loved the employment of their minds in their work. . . . Elton loved his growing understanding of Walter’s character and his ways. Though he was a quiet man and gave neither instruction nor advice, Walter was Elton’s teacher, and Elton was consciously his student. (Berry, 2004b, p. 201)

An uninformed guess about Berry might put him in the category of those, like Helen and Scott Nearing (1954, 1979), who describe a more unattached and radical individualism. But this is not a proper assessment, as the above story illustrates. Berry finds balance here, saying “a healthy community would free the man to move alone when he needed to, and it would also inform him, though he moved alone, with adequate principles and ways” (Berry, 1972, p. 39).

The principles inherent in establishing a local economy are easily stated but not so easily enacted. Consider a few of the 17 recommendations Berry (1993) gives in his essay, “Conserving Communities” (pp. 19, 20).

3. Always ask how local needs might be supplied from local sources, including the mutual help of neighbors.
7. Develop small-scale industries and business to support the local farm and/or forest economy.

11. Make the community able to invest in itself by maintaining its properties, keeping itself clean (without dirtying some other place), caring for its old people, teaching its children.

15. Always be aware of the economic value of neighborly acts. In our time the costs of living are greatly increased by the loss of neighborhood, leaving people to face their calamities alone.

16. A rural community should always be acquainted with and complexly connected with, community-minded people in nearby towns and cities.

Regional History, Tradition, and Memory Are Very Important

One cannot read Berry’s fiction far without becoming aware of two matters. First, within these stories, there is the passing on of stories and traditions across generations. Picture, for example, Young Nathan Coulter as he walks his failing grandfather home after the elder Coulter had set in the fields for the day, watching as his sons and grandson farmed. Nathan narrates:

Grandpa sat on a ledge of the rock, and I dipped the drinking cup full of water and carried it to him. He drank, then held the cup in his hands, looking at the spring.

“That’s a good vein of water,” he said. “Nobody ever knew it to go dry.”

I thought of the spring running there all the time, while the Indians hunted the country and while our people came and took the land and cleared it; and still running while Grandpa’s grandfather and his father got old and died. And running while Grandpa drank its water and waited his turn. When I thought of it that way I knew I was waiting my turn too. But that didn’t seem real. It was too far away to think about. And I saw how it would have been unreal to Grandpa for so long, and how it must have grieved him when it had finally come close enough to be known. (Berry, 2002, p. 17)

Following these comments, Nathan’s grandpa falls, dying. His life and ways are then immortalized in memory. It will be up to the next generation to retain and recall those memories when they are needed.

Second, the very form of Berry’s Port William fiction illustrates the importance of history, tradition, and memory in its recounting of 100-plus years of regional memory.
He illustrates this value metaphorically in an essay that begins with the description of a battered galvanized bucket that has been hanging on a fence post and "making earth" for 50 years as things have fallen around it, and into it. "This slow work of growth and death, gravity and decay, which is the chief work of the world, has by now produced in the bottom of the bucket several inches of black humus" (Berry, 1990b, p. 153). Berry says,

[The bucket] is doing in a passive way what a human community must do actively and thoughtfully. A human community, too, must collect leaves and stories, and turn them to account. It must build soil, and build that memory of itself—in lore and story and song—that will be its culture. (p. 153)

He recognizes the essential role of culture for both relational and ecological longevity of a place. Its loss, he believes, is practical and economic:

For one thing, such a culture contains, and conveys to succeeding generations, the history of the use of the place and the knowledge of how the place may be lived in and used. For another, the pattern of reminding implies affection for the place and respect for it, and so, finally, the local culture will carry the knowledge of how the place may be well and lovingly used, and also the implicit command to use it only well and lovingly. (p. 166)

What Berry is not talking about is statistical demographics or descriptions such as may be found in an anthropology textbook. "Modern humans tend to believe that whatever is known can be recorded in books or on tapes or on computer disc and then again learned by those artificial means" (Berry, 200b, p. 152). Instead, "known things" are more like a "family procession across a landscape" (p. 152) having both cultural significance and practical value. This explains Berry's discouragement with our contemporary nomadism. Migration, which is often about moving up, is also about moving away. When fidelity to a place is disrupted, the passed-on tradition of how life best occurs in that place passes away. "This living procession through time in a place is
the record by which such knowledge survives and is conveyed. When the procession 
ends, so does the knowledge” (p. 153).

Biographically, Berry (1989b) comments about hearing stories in the back-and-
forth experiences of family visits when he was a child.

Some stories were repeated many times; because there was much shared knowledge, 
nobody would have thought of objecting to the retelling of a well-known story. This 
repetition of what was known in common, I think, was a sort of ritualization of the 
family’s awareness of itself as a unit holding together through time. (p. 5)

This is not to imply that such story-swapping always leads to good feelings. This quote 
comes from his book The Hidden Wound, which is Berry’s adult attempt to address the 
moral strain, or in his words, the wound of racism, that exists in him as a member of a 
family that owned slaves. Of one particularly difficult story, he wonders why it has been 
remembered and told, passed down since his great-grandfather’s day. He suggests that it 
is told “in flight from its horror” and “because in the depths of our souls we all have 
recognized in it an evil that is native to us and that we cannot escape” and “as confession, 
in the unspoken, even the unthought, hope that we will finally tell it to someone who can 
forgive us (1989b, pp. 8, 9). Somehow it is necessary, though, for it results in reflection, 
perspective, repentance, and change. Berry’s (1985) own sense of value for local 
memory comes through in the poem “A Praise”:

    His memories lived in the place
    like fingers locked in the rock ledges
    like roots. When he died
    and his influence entered the air
    I said, Let my mind be the earth
    of his thought, let his kindness
    go ahead of me. Though I do not escape
    the history barbed in my flesh,
    certain wise movements of his hands,
    the turns of his speech
    keep with me. His hope of peace

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keeps with me in harsh days,
The shell of his breath dimming away
Three summers in the earth.

(p. 113)

Language Must Be Appropriately Used as a Way
to Describe, Discuss, and Work Accountably
Within Reality

As a writer and former instructor in English at the University of Kentucky, one might expect Wendell Berry to take up the matter of language as a professional hobby. But for Berry, his concern for language is largely a critique of professionalism and it is certainly more integral in his overall way of thinking than a mere hobby. He says, quite facetiously, “The sign of exceptionally smart people is than they speak a language that is intelligible only to other people in their ‘field’ or only to themselves. This is very impressive and is known as “professionalism” (Berry, 1993, p. xiii).

His concern for the health of local economies is contingent upon his ability to accurately discredit the consumerism assumptions proffered by corporate globalists. Their marketing machine is a significant threat to Berry’s passion that free people be competent to describe the world and what must be done in it with exactness. He knows that the use of a metaphor such as “the machine metaphor,” shapes understanding and behavior. Where language should unite communities together with story, memory, and conversation about the common good, instead our politicians model “rhetorical extremes, which is to say that their words—and their actions—have departed from facts, causes, and arguments, and have begun to follow the false logic of a feud. . . . Language and behavior,” says Berry, “become purely negative in function. . . . Language ceases to bind head to heart, action to principle” (Berry, 1972, p. 89).
Even the word "environment" is bothersome to this so-called spokesman of the environmental movement. He says,

"The idea that we live in something called "the environment," for instance, is utterly preposterous. This word came into use because of the pretentiousness of learned experts who were embarrassed by the religious associations of "Creation" and who thought "world" too mundane. But "environment" means that which surrounds or encircles us; it means a world separate from ourselves, outside us. The real state of things, of course, is far more complex and intimate and interesting than that. The world that environs us, that is around us, is also within us. We are made of it; we eat, drink, and breathe it; it is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. It is also a Creation, a holy mystery. . . . This world, this Creation, belongs in a limited sense to us, for we may rightfully require certain things of it—the things necessary to keep us fully alive as the kind of creature we are—but we also belong to it, and it makes certain rightful claims on us: that we care properly for it, that we leave it undiminished not just to our children but to all the creatures who will live in it after us. None of this intimacy and responsibility is conveyed by the word environment." (Berry, 1993, p. 34).

He goes on to criticize the terms "biocentrism" and "Deep ecology" as well, saying,

"Not only is this language incapable of giving a true description of our relation to the world; it is also academic, artificial, and pretentious. It is the sort of language used by a visiting expert who does not want the local people to ask any questions." (pp. 34, 35)

Berry begins to make a primary point: Language is to be used and understood by real people about the real world. Anything less results in lack of contact with the world, at best, or absent-minded exploitation, at worst. "The real names of the environment," he says, "are the names of rivers and river valleys; creeks, ridges, and mountains, towns and cities; lakes, woodlands, lanes, roads, creatures, and people" (p. 35).

He is clear what he disapproves of: Abstractions, slogans, "the middling, politically correct language of the professions is incapable either of reverence or familiarity; it is headless and footless, loveless, a language of nowhere" (Berry, 2000b, p. 137). Berry (1985) is also clear that what satisfies him is:
any man whose words
lead precisely to what exists,
who never stoops to persuasion

(p. 133)

The title essay in the book *Standing by Words* is written "for the accountability of language—hence, for the accountability of the users of language" (Berry, 1983, p. 25).

He is distressed that the quite normal use of language—to precisely designate objects, to indicate the conviction of the speaker himself, and to be structured so as to be understood—has been betrayed. He is concerned about language that is too subjective, without context, without shared connection to reality in all it is as good and bad. The focus of such language is internal, therefore not responsible to any community since it claims "freedom" as its relative justification.

Berry's concern is that when language is used objectively by experts, their motivation tends toward excusing themselves of responsibility. The users of such language purport to have external accountability, but turn out, by their use of language, to slide free of it as well. It is often the case that industrial professionals' use of language is abstract and fails to talk about what actually is or what actually could be, such as a technical disaster. He illustrates this with the example of a conversation among members of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. He says,

Their language and their way of thought make it possible for them to think of the crisis only as a technical event or problem. Even a meltdown is fairly understandable and predictable within the terms of their expertise. What is unthinkable is the evacuation of a massively populated region. It is the disorder, confusion, and uncertainty of that exodus that they cannot face. . . . If they had a language strong and fine enough to consider all the considerations, it would tend to force them out of the confines of "objective" thought and into action, out of solitude into community. (Berry, 1983, p. 41)
Which leads to an example on the flip-side, an illustration of “eminently responsible language” in the person of Nate Shaw.

He speaks always in reference to a real world, thoroughly experienced and understood. . . . It is a language under the discipline of experience, not of ideas or rules. Shaw’s words, always interposed between experience and intelligence, have the exactitude of conviction, whereas the words of an analyst or theorist can have only the exactitude of a definition. (Berry, 1990b, pp. 19, 20)

“Nothing he says,” Berry quips, “if correctly quoted, will ever be useful to a salesman or a political propagandist” (p. 21).

**Limits Exist**

“Enough” and “Stop” are words Berry would like every corporate industrialist to learn and to learn to live by. The recognition of personal limits, the limits of land, economic limits, the limits of human knowledge and control is not the American way. We are expansionists, looking for opportunity, people of unlimited potential, maximizers of our natural resources.

The human limit in relationship to land stewardship must be acknowledged by individuals and land-related businesses alike. The land’s carrying capacity is partly related to the land-owner’s caring capacity:

Belonging must be appropriately limited. This is the indispensable qualification of the idea of land ownership. It is well understood that ownership is an incentive to care. But there is a limit to how much land can be owned before an owner is unable to take proper care of it. The need for attention increases with the intensity of use. But the quality of attention decreases as acreage increases. (Berry, 1993, p. 4)

This issue (and so many others) involves a sane estimate of power and its appropriate limits. Some time after Berry hired a bulldozer to dig a pond on his land, he realized he had made an error and that the land had been damaged: “The trouble,” he admits, “was a familiar one: too much power, too little knowledge. The fault was mine” (Berry, 1990b,
And here Berry is unique since many of us in Western culture do not own up to our blunders as he has done.

Power has darkened us. The greater it grows, the harder it is for us to see beyond it, or to see the alternatives to it. . . . The rule, acknowledged or not, seems to be that if we have great power we must use it. (Berry, 2004a, p. 7)

It is this inability to recognize our dis-ability to handle the very power that we have made available to ourselves, along with the resulting lack of restraint, that has brought extensive harm to the land and the people living there.

This issue is very much related to the massive technological innovations of the 20th century. And here is the irony: The assumption is that power, such as one would find available in using a tractor, would result in greater competence on the farm. In comparing the tractor to working with horses, Berry (1981) concurs, “The coming of the tractor made it possible for a farmer to do more work, but not better. And there comes a point, as we know, when more begins to imply worse” (p. 105). The coming of new innovations does not make it inevitable that they should be used. Berry lays it down, “As I understand it, this choice depends absolutely on our willingness to limit our desires as well as the scale and kind of technology we use to satisfy them” (p. 112).

When limits are accepted, possibilities emerge. There is perspective that was not there when discontentment was the rule of the day.

And we pray, not for new earth or heaven, but to be quiet in heart, and in eye clear: What we need is here.

(Berry, 1985, p. 156)

He illustrates this many times. Here is an example from one of Berry’s best-loved members of the Port William membership.
Ptolomy Proudfoot was nothing if not a farmer. His work was farming, his study and passion were farming, his pleasures and his social life occurred in the intervals between farm jobs and in the jobs themselves. He was not an ambitious farmer—he did not propose to own a large acreage or to become rich—but merely a good and gifted one. . . . [He had] a farm of ninety-eight acres, and Tol never longed even for the two more that would have made it a hundred. (Berry, 2004b, p. 25)

Berry is not opposed to ambition, unless it is the exploitive ambition embodied in the frontiersman. Ambition to work well and hard in order to know much about what one needs to know is affirmed by Berry. But limits exist, and knowing what they are is important because they allow one to accept rest, help, and instruction. “The teachers are everywhere. What is wanted is a learner. In ignorance is hope. If we had known the difficulty, we would not have learned even so little. Rely on ignorance” (Berry, 1990b, p. 13).

Berry is an advocate for ignorance (Berry, in press). “The issue I am attempting to deal with . . . is not knowledge but ignorance. In ignorance I believe I may pronounce myself a fair expert” (Berry, 2000b, p. 10). Ignorance keeps us humble in the face of mystery. It makes us careful.

The proposition that it would be good to know everything is probably false. The real question that is always to be addressed is the one that arises from our state of ignorance: How does one act well—sensitively, compassionately, without irreparable damage—on the basis of partial knowledge? (Berry, 2000b, p. 149)

This in contrast to what Berry notices is our tendency: to destroy what we do not understand (Berry, 1972, p. 77).

**Education Is the Preparation of a Person Who Will Be Good for the World**

Berry prefers the word education to training. *Education*, as he sees it, is a cultural
responsibility that mostly occurs in a home and community over a lifetime, whereas training is done by institutions over a short time period, usually with the limitation of a specialist's objective. “A person’s education begins before his birth in the making of the disciplines, traditions, and attitudes of mind that he will inherit, and it continues until his death under the slow, expensive, uneasy tutelage of his experience” (Berry, 1972, p. 103). Berry (1990b) laments that from the earliest days,

the child is not educated to return home and be of use to the place and community; he or she is educated to leave home and earn money in a provisional future that has nothing to do with place or community. (p. 163)

In this way the potential for building home economies is undermined from the start. The goal is to provide the most minimal training possible so that a person can enter the corporate rat race, never settling, divided from spouse and place, never satisfied, and always wanting “more.” “Colleges and universities,” he explains from a historical perspective, “had originally a clear mandate to serve localities or regions—to receive the daughters and sons of their regions, educate them, and send them home again to serve and strengthen their communities” (Berry, 1987, p. 51). But this mandate has been betrayed,

having worked instead to uproot the best brains and talents, to direct them away from home into exploitative careers in one or another of the professions, and so to make them predators of communities and homelands, their own as well as other people’s. (p. 51)

The university is like a factory, divided into areas of specialty. Yet it is unlike a factory in that the parts are never put together. Teachers and students alike may know what they are doing, but not what they are making (p. 77). Berry says, “The thing being made is humanity.” He explains,
The common denominator has to be larger than either career preparation or preparation for citizenship. Underlying the idea of a university—the bringing together, the combining into one, of all the disciplines—is the idea that good work and good citizenship are the inevitable by-products of the making of a good—that is, a fully developed—human being. (p. 77)

A Good Epistemology Is a Multi-sourced
Critical Realism

Berry is a critical realist, which means he “affirms the presence of objective truth but recognizes that this is subjectively apprehended” (Hiebert, 1999, p. 69). Furthermore, this form of knowledge is “ideas that interact with feelings and values in complex ways to produce decisions and actions” (p. 74). Berry’s epistemology is multi-sourced. His mind is shaped by the literature of Western culture, nature, community, and conversation. But he puts little stock in a knowledge grounded in the current rage: “Contemporaneity, in the sense of being ‘up with the times,’ is of no value. Wakefulness to experience—as well as to instruction and example—is another matter” (Berry, 1993, p. 13). He says, “I think it is a kind of folly to assume that new knowledge is necessarily truer than old knowledge, or that empirical truth is truer than nonempirical truth” (Berry, 2003a, p. 40). He says,

The only true representation of a thing, we can say, is the thing itself. This is true also of a person. It is true of a place. It is true of the world and all its creatures. The only true picture of Reality is Reality itself. (p. 40)

This provides one way of explaining why Berry is opposed to the “futureologists” who encourage people to skip the reality that flourishes before them and to place their hopes and dreams into a future time that does not exist, and may never. Yet it is precisely because he values the future that Berry discourages those who are lured from present contentment and responsibility into marketing’s pitches for something better.
Memory and tradition are parts of Berry’s epistemology, as are reading and learning from literature. Berry confronts “the practical men” of business who think “that literacy is no more than an ornament” (1972, p. 170). Berry says that the mastery of language and the knowledge of books—is not an ornament, but a necessity. It is impractical only by the standards of quick profit and easy power. Longer perspective will show that it alone can preserve in us the possibility of an accurate judgment of ourselves, and the possibilities of correction and renewal. (p. 173)

He would also include the reflections emerging from solitude as part of his epistemology and, as illustrated above in the story of Elton Penn and Walter Cotman, the instruction of others locally. Particularly, Berry (1987) says,

There is no one to teach young people but older people and so the older people must do it. That they do not know enough to do it, that they have never been smart enough or experienced enough or good enough to do it, does not matter. They must do it because there is no one else to do it. (p. 84)

What about teachers? Well, says Berry, not only must they “dispense knowledge” they must also “enlighten ignorance.” He says that ignorance is “the condition, the predicament, in which teaching is done, for teachers do not know the life or the lives for which their students are being prepared” (p. 85). And so Berry supports a realistic epistemology that works toward truth and best practice in light of the limits of knowledge.

It needs to be said again that these 11 values are a part of each other. They are also linked by the values of truth, reason, and freedom that Mills and Berry share throughout their work. They inform the person who would be free of Mills’s concern that we live as a culture of cheerful robots.
Conclusion

There is something to be said about reading an author’s complete collection. Doing so has the potential of taking the reader deep inside the author’s mind and heart. This is especially true with a writer who has something important to say, addresses both contemporary and perennial issues, and writes well! Berry does, and therefore his values come forth with oomph. But to read just one book from one literary genre, a novice reader of Berry might miss his overall message. That is what has motivated me to collate his big ideas, or as I have said, his primary and secondary values. I do this, aware of the warning given by Jayber Crow in the front matter of the book “written by himself” (Berry, 2000a):

NOTICE

Persons attempting to find a “text” in this book will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a “subtext” in it will be banished; persons attempting to explain, interpret, explicate, analyze, deconstruct, or otherwise “understand” it will be exiled to a desert island in the company only of other explainers.

BY ORDER OF THE AUTHOR

Persuasively, Berry and his Port William characters portray a set of values that are counter-cultural at the start of the space-age 21st century. Where we value consumption, they value production capability, thrift, and having enough. Where we value migration, they value fidelity to their scrap of land and others in their “membership.” Where we value innovation, they value history and tradition. Where we value convenience (via market codependence), they value work and independence.

So please forgive me, Mr. Crow. Banish me for finding texts and subtexts! For I live in a culture lost in space! Looking closely at the people of Port William and

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listening closely to the farmer-author from Port Royal have helped to ground me in goodness.

Of his interview with Berry, Jordan Fisher-Smith (1993) says,

Berry's wife Tanya, a graceful, purposeful woman from a family of artists, with a pretty face and calm green eyes, leans into the room from the kitchen with a newspaper in her hand. She says something to Berry about the funding for NASA being cut. Berry looks satisfied and replies that he thinks this is a good move.

I decide to probe Berry about his attitudes on the widely accepted virtues of the view of fragile Earth from space. Berry has a certain puckish grin when he is out to puncture some popular icon, which spreads across his face as he drawls, “That view didn't do much for me; it looked like a poor old Christmas ornament.”

Then he looks at me and, a little more seriously now, polishes his argument.

“Let's say you were from somewhere else, seeing this Earth from space for the first time. I don't know about you, but I wouldn't be satisfied with that view; I'd want to get closer, walk around on it, even get down on my hands and knees. That's how I prefer to see the Earth.” (¶ 9-13)

This perspective describes how Berry has come to such a clear understanding of what is valuable and, as a result, to guide and discipline his behavioral choices. Upon community-wide adoption, Berry would expect these values to lead toward a properly functioning society that is good and successful.

In chapter 5, I look at the literature on leadership from the perspective of values. I attempt to describe the role of leaders in establishing values within their business cultures. Finally, I look at how Wendell Berry’s work serves to advise those who would like to build agrarian values like his into the culture of their organizations.
CHAPTER 5

VALUES IN LEADERSHIP THEORY AND GLIMMERS
OF THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

Prior to the publication of James MacGregor Burns's book, *Leadership* (1978), the moral dimension "had not been infused into any leadership theory" (p. 31). Rost (1991) notes, however, "The ethics of leadership is a subject just now taking hold. Leadership scholars and practitioners must pay increasing attention to the subject" (p. 127). Rost (1995) himself made such an attempt a few years later.

Heifetz (1994), on the other hand, says that the word leadership is inherently *not* value-free. Therefore, morality has *always* existed in leadership whether hidden or exposed, good or bad. Heifetz says that "leadership terms, loaded with emotional content, carry with them implicit norms and values" (p. 14). He says, for example, that both the great man theory and the trait theory place "value on the historymaker, the person of extraordinary influence" (p. 17). The contingency theory of Vroom finds value in "organizational effectiveness" (p. 285, n. 22). The transactional approach "promotes influence as an orienting value, perpetuating a confusion between means and ends" (p. 18). Heifetz concludes that the major theories attempt to define leadership objectively, without making value judgments. When defining leadership in terms of prominence, authority, and influence, however, these theories introduce value-biases implicitly. . . . If we leave the value implications of
our teaching and practice unaddressed, we encourage people, perhaps unwittingly, to aspire to great influence or high office, regardless of what they do there. (pp. 18, 19)

Joanne Ciulla (1996) sees it from yet another angle, acknowledging “in their attempt to do value-free social science, researchers of the past filtered out the ethical issues of leadership and in doing so, failed to give us a very good understanding of leadership” (p. 182). She points out that in Bass and Stogdill’s “encyclopedic” *Handbook on Leadership* (Bass, 1990), none of the 37 chapters deals with the matters of ethics and leadership. The index connects just 5 of the 917 pages to the matter, though briefly (Ciulla, 1995). Ciulla comes to the leadership studies table, in disagreement with Rost, suggesting “the ultimate question in leadership studies is not ‘What is the definition of leadership?’ The ultimate point of studying leadership is, ‘What is good leadership?’ The use of the word good here has two logical senses, morally good and technically good or effective” (Ciulla, 1995, ¶ 39).

In chapter 2, I said that values are “preferred convictions” that remind us what we believe is right and wrong and then, as a result, affect our ethical choices. They are the foundation and framework for living the good life—the life of virtue—and working well. Moral values are different from, but closely connected to, moral virtues. Virtues are ethical qualities particularly focused on characteristics that make for human flourishing. Virtues are observed in acts of goodness done by good persons. They are ends, not means to a greater end. Value-based leaders may not be ethically virtuous, but the potential that they would be is greater. Values offer leaders guidance for virtuous choices when decisions of good and bad, right and wrong, best and second best must be made. So, values are not ethical behaviors, but they are the foundation of such behaviors. At a
Harvard University *Roundtable on Leadership*, Heymann and Heifetz (2000) questioned the “normative dimension of leadership.” They ask if the word “leadership” is descriptive and value-free, or does it inherently contain the idea of goodness or morality? Must a good leader necessarily be a good person, i.e., is character a necessary element of leadership? Who determines the criteria for judging or evaluating “good” or “effective” or “successful” leadership? Should values be taught as part of leadership courses, and if so, what values? (¶ 17)

Heifetz (2000) is quoted as saying, “[Leadership] is not a neutral term like ‘chair’ or ‘electron.’” (¶ 2)

Leaders of organizations reside in a precarious place. Owners, consultants, and Wall Street usually affirm them when the organization is “successful” (e.g., Jack Welch of GE) but they may be fired when it is not (e.g., The recent departure of Hewlett Packard’s CEO, Carly Fiorina). Furthermore, there are those who are watching them on a moral level. Leaders are celebrated if they bring a moral grounding to an organization (e.g., James E. Burke, former CEO of Johnson & Johnson). But they get their hands slapped by their board, by the law, by self-appointed watch-dogs, or by the society at large when they take the organization into ethical weeds (e.g., Enron’s CFO Andrews Fastow).

The postmodern culture (or, Giddens’s “high modernity”) complicates these things. It appears to most that greed is bad, but it still pays off. Being unkind is always wrong unless the unkind work of mergers and acquisitions will allow the CEO to kindly bless his shareholders with increased profits. The relative nature of postmodern morality makes accountability and cries for justice unimpressive. The consumer keeps buying chemically altered foods so the agribusiness corporations keep making them. John Dalla Costa (1998) observes:
If an audit were done on the idea that society has of itself, we would find a reflection that is primarily, and almost exclusively, economic. The value of a person is largely determined by possessions and wealth. The value of the community is largely that of supporting the infrastructure for business growth and job creation. The value of education is mostly in the job or career that it possibly secures. The value of science is in the R&I of new products. And the value of human life is reduced to an equation of productivity, consumption, and contribution to the gross national product. (p. 311)

The moral ideology we have noted in the writings of Wendell Berry is absent in the literature of business leadership, save a handful of exceptions. But beyond authors such as these, there appears to be no unified value-based moral ideology for business leaders who would wish to incorporate an agrarian sensitivity. Leaving behind the land and the agrarian values that are grounded there further disables the leaders' ability to define success and establish a comprehensive morality. The inability of leaders to think sociologically, systemically, reflectively, intuitively, long-term, ecologically, consequentially, and outside the box of Western culture is a problem.

Below, (a) I look at a number or ways that values are understood and used within organizational culture; (b) I discuss the important role of leaders as it relates to moral values and organizational culture; (c) I discuss how a morally centered sociological imagination would serve the leader as a guide for the appropriate integration of values in organizational culture; (d) I then suggest several conceptual ideas for how Wendell Berry’s values via his sociological imagination can assist leaders in planting a new set of values within their organizational context.

Ways That Values Are Used by Leaders
Within Organizational Culture

No wonder the place of values is uncertain. Writers in leadership, management, and organizational theory use the concept in multiple ways. Following are seven ways
that the concept of values is used in the literature of business, leadership, and organizational culture:

1. Values identify what is important to leaders and followers.
2. Values define boundaries leaders must work within, based on the social contract.
3. Values classify various contextual understandings of what is good so businesses and business leaders might behave within boundaries of commonly accepted norms.
4. Values promote healthy workplace relationships.
5. Values describe systemic inner-organizational ideals.
6. Values uphold a concern for corporate long-term sustainability.
7. Values justify organizational practices that have external implications on society and the environment.

Values Identify What Is Important to Leaders and Followers

A number of scholars focus on the personal preference of people, particularly leaders and followers. In an early article on the topic, Guth and Tagiuri (1965) suggest a significant connection between the leader’s values and corporate strategy:

Not all companies have corporate strategies. Most executives, however, have personal concepts of what their company’s corporate strategy is or ought to be. In the absence of a viable degree of consensus on a particular set of goals and policies, each executive will tend to behavior in accordance with his own concept and, in turn, his own values. (p. 127)

Kouzes and Posner (1993) “have had career-long interests in personal and leadership values” (p. xx) and their book on the leader’s credibility is one result of their research.
They say, “To be credible as a leader, you must first clarify your own values, the standards by which you choose to live your life. Values guide how you feel, what you say, what you think, how you make choices, and how you act” (p. 52). They follow quickly on these comments about the leader’s values with the observation that “leaders show others how everyone’s individual values and interests can be served by coming to consensus on a set of common values” (p. 53).

Often, the values of leaders and followers are consistent with each other. For example, the business leader may say, “I value empowerment” and the worker may say, “I value being trusted.” There are times, however, when they contradict each other. The leader may value speedy productivity while the follower may wish to do careful and meaningful work.

Boyatzis and Skelly (1991) suggest three additional ways that value-trends affect organizational life: First, the values a person holds influence his/her desire to join and stay with a particular organization. Second, once in the organization the degree of value compatibility affects a person’s use of discretionary effort, and therefore, determines the extent to which the person uses his/her capability or competencies. Third, since people appear to hold the beliefs consistent with the era in which they grew up (especially through adolescence) there will be inevitable conflicts as managers, subordinates, and colleagues find themselves interacting but having substantially different values about the nature of work and life (pp. 10, 11).
Values Define Boundaries Leaders Must Work Within, Based on the Social Contract

In the tradition of Thomas Hobbes (1982) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1968), many business leaders and thinkers work under the assumption, sometimes stated (though usually assumed), that business exists under a social contract. The understanding is that there is one and only one social responsibility of business—to use its resources and engage in activities to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say, engage in open and free competition, without deception or fraud. . . . Few trends could so thoroughly undermine the very foundations of our free society as the acceptance by corporate officials of a social responsibility other than to make as much money for their stockholders as possible. (Friedman, 1982, p. 133)

For others, the social contract exists as a benefit to employees: “The traditional social contract, loosely defined, had at its heart the notion that individual work—loyal, consistent, and enduring over time—would be rewarded with steadily increasing pay, responsibility, and security” (D. Miller, 1997, p. 121). Douglas Sherwin (1989) recognizes (a) owners (stockholders) and (b) workers, but adds a third entity to the business system: (c) the customer. He suggests that the three are interdependent:

Besides being interdependent, the members of the system are entirely equal in importance. Business people often claim primacy for capital, perceiving it as the fuel of enterprise, while consumers tend to assume that the whole point of business is to provide them with goods and services. But no member of a system can be primary. Since the contribution of every member is necessary and no contribution is sufficient, the members are equal. (p. 145)

How does this relate to values? Sherwin (1989) says that business “operates according to the values of its leaders. . . . What leaders cause [business] to do is determined by their values. Deciding what values are ‘good’ is, therefore, the first responsibility of business leadership” (p. 147). He acknowledges that leaders have their own values but refers back to his conception of business as an interdependent system as the basis for establishing the values that leaders must work within. Contra Freidman,
Sherwin points out that profit cannot be the primary purpose of business since rewarding owners may minimize the contribution of employees or customers and put their risks in jeopardy. Business values, therefore, must be focused on creating equilibrium within a multi-member system.

But if the reader has Wendell Berry in mind, then we must account for the existence of additional members of the business system that Sherwin (1989) does not consider. Land, air, water, and communities are the most apparent examples. What about them? Sherwin cites current public policy as the guidelines: “Whatever public policy requires of business, business, of course, must do: reduce pollutants to meet the new standards” (p. 152). Then he gives this disclaimer:

But if business is already conforming to the requirements of public policy, one can infer that, for that case and for the time being at least, society prefers the social good of economic performance from business to the social good of reduced pollution and accepts the existing degree of pollution. If the business system nevertheless voluntarily internalizes the cost, it is depriving its members of value and altruistically conferring that value on a public that isn’t directly a part of the system. If society wants economic performance from business in a sphere it has defined by public policy, such a gift from management thwarts society’s strategy. (p. 152)

Values Classify Various Contextual Understandings of What Is Good so Businesses and Business Leaders Might Behave Within Boundaries of Commonly Accepted Norms

Within any social system, a minimum of three public contexts that speak to the notion of what is good. First, there is the historic context in which tradition and memory give input. John Gardner (1990), who has worked in government, industry, and education, says, “A vision relevant for us today will build on values deeply embedded in human history and in our own tradition” (p. xi). He speaks of “the great [American]
ideas that still beckon—freedom, equality, justice, the release of human possibilities” (p. xi).

Second, there is the moral context in which the public has agreed upon standards of acceptable activity. Few would disagree, for example, that honesty is good. Which means most agree that there is a kind of leadership that is morally bad. This, in part, was what led Barbara Kellerman to write up her research on *Bad Leadership* (2004). The themes in her book reveal that leadership goes haywire when greed, power, and other addictive impulses are left unchecked. The result is often devastating, and “the overall costs of bad leadership are impossible to calculate precisely. . . . Bad leadership incurs costs not only at the level of the individual but also at the level of the group” (p. 222).

Though not dealing with values directly, Kellerman (2004) makes clear that they are at play pervasively in the overall leadership process. Consider, for example, the case of “Chainsaw Al” Dunlap who came to the CEO role at Sunbeam. “In essence, Dunlap’s restructuring strategy involved an egregious kind of callousness: Without ceremony or second-guessing, he pitted the company’s stakeholders, including its employees, against the company’s stockholders” (p. 129). Or consider the former president of the International Olympic Committee, Juan Antonio Samaranch. Samaranch had a value for *more* “and never said ‘enough.’ Enough growth. Enough money. Enough commercialization” (p. 72). Those who know the facts agree with history’s judgment: These leaders turned out to be bad leaders.

Finally, there are the popular ideas of goodness. This is problematic in the postmodern culture. There are those who think that wealth and power are good (and that *having them* is a reflection of good character) while others find these to be the basis of
corruption. Many speak the value of health but find it difficult to live healthy lives in a culture of fast-food. The “value” of fitness becomes lethargic in a culture so strongly influenced by the entertainment industry.

Yet all this—for better or for worse—dictates the strategic designs of business. Snyder, Dowd, and Houghton (1994) say,

Customer focus goes beyond simply conceding to the customer the right to determine the quality of a product or service; it requires that organizations implicitly assess the value of all their actions in terms of the differences they make to the customer. (p. 161)

“In order to be the value in our market, we must clearly understand what the marketplace values” (Mitchell, 2003, p. 40). Business just continues to feed into the values that it helped create by marketing “food” that comes ready made, requiring no creative thought on the part of the consumer and little to no health contained in the package. I am thinking now of a Smucker’s product called “Uncrustables” (http://www.smucker.com/fg/otg/uncrustables/default.asp.) Paul McAleer (2001) of The Daily Ping explains,

... It's a prepackaged peanut butter and jelly sandwich with the crust already removed! Now, I know it's temptuously easy to just purchase a prepackaged food item, but come on—how long does it take to make a PB&J sandwich?

What is also scary about this product is that it's frozen. Yep - you buy it hard as a brick, and just let it thaw over the course of the day (from lunch packing time to lunch eating time.) The thing looks really scary, but I think it says a lot more about what's going on in the world today. Heck, when we don't have time to make a sandwich - arguably one of the simplest things to make - we might want to rethink this stuff. (¶ 2, 3)
Values Promote Healthy Workplace Relationships

The best example of this comes from Kuczmarski and Kuczmarski's book *Values-based Leadership* (1995). Essentially, the Kuczmarskis' book is about re-placing social cohesion in the places people spend the most time—their workplace. The authors state,

Values are the shared goals, beliefs, ideals, and purposes of the group. . . . In order for a group to maintain a set of values, the group must establish norms that shape and influence the behaviors, attitudes, and activities of its members. (p. 25)

They are quick to say that "leadership is the missing link to tie norms and values together within an organization. It's the linchpin for developing a cohesive, motivated, and productive group of employees" (p. 11). A lengthy plan for instituting values is provided and includes the suggestion that different values lists be created. For example, (a) a "People Values Pledge" defines the nature of workers' relationship with one another in the workplace and (b) an "Organization Values Pledge is a set of values and behavioral commitments that top management and the organization as a whole make to all employees" (p. 124).

Kuczmarski and Kuczmarski (1995) are keen to educate would-be leaders in the practices they will need to establish such values. These practices center around relational contact and intuitiveness, education, communication, and passion (pp. 189-200). A further list of leadership skills includes intuitive decision making, drawing out a group's insight and building consensus, handing criticism well, sharing leadership, and putting group resources to work (pp. 225-234). After three chapters focused on the role of leadership, they say,

The critical challenge to leadership in the workplace is to build, maintain, and perpetuate its culture . . . through establishing a set of values. This value system acts as a steering wheel for the entire organization. It enables leaders to hold the organization in place, creating positive outcomes. (p. 245)
Values Describe Systemic Inner-organizational Ideals

The suggestion here is often mingled with, or a corollary to, the above use of values dealing with healthy workplace relationships. Here, values are not so much about how people work with each other. Rather, these values are words and phrases that describe the organization in its proudest moments. It describes what they hope outsiders would say about them upon looking at what they are accomplishing. Peters and Waterman (1982) popularized the value of excellence values in their best seller *In Search of Excellence*. They say,

Every excellent company we studied is clear on what it stands for, and takes the process of value shaping seriously. In fact, we wonder whether it is possible to be an excellent company without clarity on values and without having the right sorts of values. (p. 280)

They offer a quote from Philip Selznick (1957), who says, “The institutional leader is primarily an expert in the promotion and protection of values” (cited in Peters & Waterman, 1982, p. 281). In his search for a definition for leadership, Joseph Rost (1991) is critical of this approach:

Much of the literature of the 1980s stemming from Peters and Waterman (1982) has this notion of leadership—leaders getting people to do things over and above what is expected, so as to transform an organization according to some criteria of excellence. Excellence, evidently, demands that people do more than what is expected. (p. 85)

Rost then offers “the cynical wag” in asking, “What happens to leadership when the expectations are raised and become part of the regular requirements?” (p. 85). The question is whether such values are what the organization perpetually shoots for, knowing it can never reach them perfectly, or whether they are more like goals that create leaders, workers, and corporate cultures that are driven according to unrealistic
expectations. Kuczmarski and Kuczmarski (1995) include a third Value Pledge (in addition to the two mentioned earlier). This one is directed to customers and it describes commitments to product innovation, service, and customer benefits. This illustrates how values are meant to impact a business’s success with patrons.

Perhaps an example that integrates value concepts #4 and #5 comes from Noel Tichy’s *The Leadership Engine* (1997). He says that winning leaders “articulate a set of values for the entire organization or team” (p. 108). He follows with the example of ServiceMaster whose four core values are engraved on a marble slab at its headquarters in Illinois (p. 109). Tichy says, “These values are engraved in the hearts and minds of everyone who works for ServiceMaster” (p. 109).

Values Uphold a Concern for Long-term Corporate Sustainability

Wendell Berry and others (Hawken, 1994; Newton, 2003; Stead & Stead, 2000) would expect sustainability to be concerned with land and natural resources. Sustainability, says The World Commission on Environment and Development, is “development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Gladwin, Kennelly, & Krause, 1995, p. 876). Some organizations have used this term to define their own hope for themselves. Here I use it to begin to show how moral values are an important means for a business to sustain itself.

In their work on corporate moral development, Reidenbach and Robin (1991) identify five stages that define the emergence of a mature ethical organization. Following Stage 1, *the amoral organization*, they describe *the legalistic corporation* which complies
only with the letter of the law. The prime emphasis is on legally making money with little concern for peripheral moral concerns. In Stage 3, the authors describe the responsive corporation. At this stage, “management tests the efficacy of social responsive behavior and begins to understand the economic value of moral behavior” (p. 279). At this stage, the leadership has an early awareness that its own long-term survival is based—to some extent—on its ability to function as a moral entity. Stage 4 is the emergent ethical organization, and stage 5 (of which the authors “know of no examples of organizations which have reached this level” [p. 280]) is the ethical organization.

For example, in order to at least comply with the moral value of financial integrity, annual audits by an external examiner are set up, the CEO’s salary may be capped, and the company may even choose to give away a portion of its profits to charity. While such developments are good, the irony is that a sustainable, “ethical” organization may exist that does not contribute to a sustainable natural world, or—worse—is a nature-abuser. This, in fact, makes it unsustainable! Gladwin, et al., (1995) comment on this disconnect:

Organic and biotic limits in the natural world are excluded from the realm of organizational science. Theories employ organismic metaphors restricted to only humanly mediated transactions across organization-environment boundaries, ignoring the myriad ecosystem service transactions that ultimately keep organizations alive. Quite simply, how many organizations could exist in the absence of oxygen production, fresh water supply, or fertile soul? The disassociation intellectually disconnects organizations from the ultimate sources of life. (p. 875)

Values Justify Organizational Practices That Have External Implications on Society and the Environment

Finally, we come to the use of values for concerns that inherently go beyond the benefit that the organization, its owners, stakeholders, and even customers may incur.
Here, value and values are defined beyond corporate bottom line or even GNP. For example, in *The Ethical Imperative*, John Dalla Costa (1998) presents four different approaches for creating a global business ethic and, of the four, three overtly make an ecological connection as part of their proposed “common values.” The fourth makes the connection implicitly (pp. 130-138). He recognizes that environmental issues are still a contested hot button in the business world. Yet he holds to their importance. He says,

> The intimacy with which we are entwined in the natural world demands that this use be not only responsible, but harmonious. Harmony in this instance means regenerative. As the symmetry expresses it, *use nature only for what you need and in balance with what can be put back*. (p. 171)

Dalla Costa sites 3M as an example of a company that wants to do more than comply with government regulations and to move toward sustainable development that includes both corporate and environmental sustainability (pp. 193, 194).

In an extremely well-crafted business-biography, Tom Chappell (1993) tells the story of how the company he and his wife Kate started in 1970 was established upon a set of “holistic” values. The values at Tom’s of Maine are Tom and Kate’s values. They “had a mission, though we hadn’t recognized it as such at the time because it was our life, the way we lived” (p. 24). But the challenge was to build ownership of those values into their people. At one point in the company’s history, Tom was unsure how to articulate his values to his marketing and sales leaders: “They were unable to imagine the possibilities because they had been trained to deal in the tangibles, to control and maximize them, and to identify the trends” (p. 21).

Starting with the board, he began to educate his key leaders that while the company existed to make profit, profit-making was not its sole or even primary reason for existence. Through a great deal of group learning, the board was eventually able to
state: “We believe that the company can be financially successful, environmentally sensitive, and socially responsible” (p. 30).

Tom Chappell is committed to educating his company to understand its place in the social system. Ben and Jerry’s Ice Cream company is known to be the same kind of organization. However, Moses Pava (2002) says that in companies such as Ben and Jerry’s the “leaders are claiming that they have created moral communities when in fact they have failed to pass fully through the stage of ethical institutionalization” (p. 52). In other words, the values are not yet established in such a way that the corporate community can defend them, but also refine and elaborate upon them appropriately. Pava illustrates that “Ben and Jerry’s woeful and inconsistent defense of their decision to stop purchasing water from the Golan Heights in 1999 reflects an immature process of ethical decision making” (p. 52).

Further examples would include social concern for the poor, global illiteracy, and the exploitation of women and children.

The Role of Leaders Related to Moral Values and Organizational Culture

In chapter 2, I described the elements of a culture. Here I am indebted to Schein (1992) and Deal and Kennedy (1982) for their work in defining corporate cultures. The above discussion on values can now be given an immediate context: the individual business as culture. Further contexts would include the broader institution in which the business exists. So, for example, there is a culture that one can almost imagine for hospital workers or politicians or farmers. Another is the social culture in which the business exists, which may include multiple ethnicities, religions, and epistemologies.
Business leaders play a crucial role in embedding cultural values. The question is whether they will be intentional in doing so. If the leader is not thoughtful about setting cultural values, values will still be established. They will be based on the leader’s perceived infatuations, observed decisions, and, due to lack of clear moral guidance, the default-mechanisms of the followers.

A reputation for ethically neutral leadership may exist because the leader has not proactively made ethics and values an explicit and evident part of the leadership agenda. Executives must recognize that if they do not develop a reputation for ethical leadership, they will likely be tagged as “ethically neutral.” As a result, employees will believe that the bottom line is the only value that should guide their decisions and that the CEO cares more about himself and the short-term financials than about the long-term interests of the organization and its multiple stakeholders. (Trevino, Hartman, & Brown, 2000, p. 130)

A better path would be for the leader to be proactive about the significant role he or she plays in shaping the culture’s values.

But there is a contrary side to this. Sridhar and Camburn (1993) say that “organizational values may have greater impact on individual behavior than personal values” (p. 727). They are concerned that emphasizing the personal values of the leader does not take into account the complexity of the “social organizations where individuals act in concert and develop shared meanings, shared cultures and collective values systems” (p. 729). They cite former Johnson & Johnson CEO James E. Burke who “while commenting on how they dealt with the Tylenol® crisis, credited their Credo for ensuring consistency and unity of thought and action in the organization” (p. 737).

There are three problems with Sridhar and Camburn’s conclusions. First, they do not take into account the role of the leader as organizational founder. As Dickson, Smith, Grojean, & Ehrhart (2001) say,
Climate formation begins with the founder of an organization. The founder and early leaders bring to the organization their individual values, and these values play a primary role in determining an organization’s strategy, structure, climate and culture. (p. 201)

These authors suggest, with others (Schein, 1992; Trevino et al., 2000), that the founder sets the ethical climate by serving as a role model, using rewards and punishment to indicate what is ethical, and developing initial policies and procedures with moral values in mind (Dickson et al, 2001, p. 208). Lord and Brown (2001) believe that such a focus is crucial:

Behaviors and specific task goals have a more narrow task focus and shorter temporal duration than do identities and values. . . . The duration and scope of a leader’s influence will be greater if leadership actions are focused on more general processes such as value and self identities. (p. 136)

Lord and Brown also concede that there is a blended influence, saying, “Leaders are an immediate source of activation for values and identities, but the culture can also have an important effect” (p. 136).

Second, Sridhar and Camburn (1993) seem to miss the role that a leader like Johnson & Johnson’s Burke (and before him, General Robert Wood Johnson, who wrote the Credo in 1943) plays in embedding the values within organizational culture. True, Burke did not take credit for the costly ethical choice his company made in recalling all Tylenol® products during the crisis. Yet, “clearly he was responsible for guiding the organization through the values articulation process and for making the credo prominent in corporate culture and consciousness” (Trevino et al., 2000, p. 141). Burke was not the company founder and yet his role in confirming its values within a new generation of leaders and employees was essential. Schein (1985) notes that it is important for leaders
like him to remember that “leadership starts the change process in the first place” (p. 332).

Third, in highlighting the organization as a monistic entity, Sridhar and Camburn (1993) fail to give proper respect to the experience, insight, and moral preferences of individuals. The postmodern tendency is toward easy harmony, for they would have us suppose that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts; that the system has a wisdom beyond the reach of ordinary mortals. But this is not so. The individual can be greater than the group, and his lone imagination worth a thousand graphs and studies. (Whyte, 1957, p. 202)

As a culture, the organization is the sum of its parts and yet it is still true that one person—whether leader or follower—can make a difference.

Fundamentally, John Dalla Costa (1998) has done an excellent job in describing strategies for leaders. Leaders “set the context” and “provide the rules” (p. 211). They need “inner discipline” and “vision to balance the self-interest and competitive instincts demanded by the market with the legal and moral responsibilities” (p. 211). They need moral authority, which “requires of leaders that they be moral and that they be developing morally” (p. 214). Further, “a major priority for CEOs is to develop character in parallel to results, both in a deepening moral maturity for themselves and in a more far-reaching ethical orientation for the enterprise” (p. 214).

Leadership and the Morally Centered Sociological Imagination

I found nothing in the literature on business or leadership that suggests the usefulness of the sociological imagination, per se. Yet I am convinced that in its essence, it can be found in some of the sources available to us. For example, James O’Toole’s Leading Change (1996) is a study in applying the sociological imagination to the
leadership task. As a social anthropologist with a passion for historical sense-making, O’Toole suggests:

Indeed, leadership can be learned only if we change our lenses of perception from the dominant trio of casual observation, social science, and ideology to the more useful triad of logic, history, and morality. Having changed focus, one begins to see that leaders fail to bring about constructive change because they fail to apply the lessons of moral experience. (p. 108)

Two other substantial examples are Robert Greenleaf’s *Servant Leadership* (1977) and Ronald A. Heifetz’s *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (1994).

Foresight as Sociological Imagination: Greenleaf’s Servant Leader

Robert Greenleaf (1977) has become legendary as the humble AT&T executive who introduced us to the guide Leo in Herman Hesse’s book *Journey to the East*. Leo, the guide—the servant to a group of travelers—is finally recognized as their leader. “To me,” says Greenleaf, “this story clearly says that the great leader is seen as servant first, and that simple fact is the key to his greatness” (p. 7). A number of times in the opening essay Greenleaf suggests the importance of what he will eventually call “Foresight—The Central Ethic of Leadership.”

As a criterion for those who would seek out a leader, Greenleaf (1977) notes,

Why would anybody accept the leadership of another except that the other sees more clearly where it is best to go? Perhaps this is the current problem: too many who presume to lead do not see more clearly and, in defense of their inadequacy, they all the more strongly argue that the ‘system’ must be preserved—a fatal error in this day of candor. (p. 15)

These words might just as fittingly belong to Mills, whose concern is critical of such systems. Mills (1959) cites Mannheim who

has made the point in a clear way by speaking of ‘self rationalization,’ which refers to the way in which an individual, caught in the limited segments of great, rational

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organizations, comes systematically to regulate his impulses and his aspirations, his manner of life and his ways of thoughts, in rather strict accordance with 'the rules and regulations of the organization.' The rational organization is thus an alienating organization: the guiding principles of conduct and reflection, and in due course of emotion as well, are not seated in the individual conscience . . . or in . . . independent reason. . . . The guiding principles, in fact, are alien to and in contradiction with all that has been historically understood as individuality. It is not too much to say that in the extreme development the chance to reason of most men is destroyed, as rationality increases and its locus, its control, is moved from individual to the big-scale organization. There is then rationality without reason. Such rationality is not commensurate with freedom but the destroyer of it. (p. 170)

The servant leader, aware of the malaise for the individual in the organization, would listen and understand. He or she would then use "imagination that connects the verbal concept to the hearer's own experience" (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 18). This effort to learn and communicate is built on intuition, which is "a feel for patterns, the ability to generalize based on what has happened previously" (p. 23). Fluidity of intellectual thought and a sense of history are important for Greenleaf, as they are for Mills.

Greenleaf's "central ethic" is embodied in

the prudent man [who] is one who constantly thinks of now as the moving concept in which past, present moment, and future are one organic unity. . . . One is at once, in every moment of time, historian, contemporary analyst, and prophet—not three separate roles. . . . Living this way is partly a matter of faith. (p. 25)

What makes this an ethical matter for Greenleaf is that it appeals to the leader to enact a proactive morality before immoral consequences of a particular action are revealed. For example, something that is criticized today (say the problem of soil depletion on farms in the Midwest) might be a non-issue if a servant leader had applied the practice of "foresight," or, the sociological imagination, 100 years ago. Greenleaf's cry is for leaders who are

always at two levels of consciousness. One is in the real world—concerned, responsible, effective, value oriented. One is also detached, riding above it, seeing
today’s events, and seeing oneself deeply involved in today’s events, in the perspective of a long sweep of history and projected into the indefinite future. (p. 26)

“The sociological imagination,” says Mills (1959), “... consists of the capacity to shift from one perspective to another, and in the process to build up an adequate view of a total society and of its components” (p. 211).

Greenleaf (1977) understands that the implications of what he suggests are weighty and therefore knows that “some people cannot take what they see when the doors of perception are open too wide.” It is therefore “a qualification for leadership ... that one can tolerate a sustained wide span of awareness” (p. 27). But the benefits are also significant: “It is value building and value clarifying and it armors one to meet the stress of life by helping build serenity in the face of stress and uncertainty. ... Able leaders” he concludes, “are usually sharply awake and reasonably disturbed. They are not seekers after solace. They have their own inner serenity” (pp. 27, 28). To the intellectual craftsman, Mills (1959) suggests:

By keeping an adequate file system and thus developing self-reflective habits, you learn how to keep your inner world awake. Whenever you feel strongly about events or ideas you must try not to let them pass from your mind, but instead to formulate them ... and ... draw out their implications, show yourself either how foolish these feelings or ideas are, or how they might be articulated into productive shape. (p. 197)

I find Mills’s advice to be consistent with Greenleaf’s description of a leader who has foresight.

One aspect of a leader’s foresight is the awareness that power can have a coercive nature. It is when it is “covert and subtly manipulative [that it] is insidious and hard to detect” (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 42). Greenleaf believes that servant leaders with foresight are important because they are dependable and trusted and can serve to help others become more aware. The ultimate test of the servant leader is seen in those being served:
“Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?” (pp. 13, 14). Though Mills hopes that his colleagues in the social sciences would achieve such a goal, I am sure he would be glad (if not surprised) to hear that organizational leaders are acting to free the “cheerful robots.”

Heifetz’s Adaptive Work as Sociological Imagination

In making a connection to biological evolution that may be unnecessary, Heifetz (1994) posits a description of “adaptive work” as the key criterion for and the central task of leadership. By this he means

developing the organizational and cultural capacity to meet problems successfully according to our values and purposes. And when there are conflicts over values and purposes, which happen frequently, the clarification and integration of competing values itself becomes adaptive work. (p. 3)

Heifetz’s (1994) biological analogy illustrates how animals (and cultures) either make the changes necessary when environmental shifts occur—they adapt—or they die off. Over time, we learn from the history of our forebears what to do and what not to do to survive. He suggests that the task of leadership is to mobilize people to do something that is socially useful through adaptive work.

Adaptive work consists of the learning required to address conflicts in the values people hold, or to diminish the gap between the values people stand for and the reality they face. Adaptive work requires a change in values, beliefs, or behavior. The exposure and orchestration of conflict—internal contradictions—within individuals and constituencies provide the leverage for mobilizing people to learn new ways. (p. 22)

Problems—“the disparity between values and circumstances” (p. 35)—exist. Leadership does not bring solutions, but rather facilitates “productive interaction of different values
through which each member or faction in a society sees reality and its challenges” (p. 33). Mills (1959) says,

No problem can be adequately formulated unless the values involved and the apparent threat to them are stated. These values and their imperilment constitute the terms of the problem itself. . . .

The formulation of problems, then, should include explicit attention to a range of public issues and of personal troubles, and they should open up for inquiry the causal connections between milieux and social structure. In our formulation of problems we must make clear the values that are really threatened in the troubles and issues involved, who accepts them as values and by whom or by what they are threatened. Such formulations are often greatly complicated by the fact that the values found to be imperiled are not always those which individuals and publics believe to be imperiled, or at any rate not the only ones. (pp. 129, 130)

For Heifetz (1994), the leader's task is to facilitate adaptive work by clarifying the opposing values, creating a conversation about the conflict, and by asking questions that determine the better alternative.

The challenge is that people want leaders to solve their problems. Conversely, leaders tend to like the role of problem-solver. There becomes a mutual reliance on one another, an unspoken though loud-and-clear understanding that a transactional agreement has been struck: the people will comply with the leader, if in exchange, she will remove their anxiety by doing the group's work. Heifetz (1994) contends that dependency on authority discourages people from engaging with problems when they must. Instead of generating creativity and responsibility, charismatic authority can generate a mindless following or devolve into bureaucratic institutions that rely on central planning and control. Creativity is stimulated by engaging with one's environment, but the skill of sensing local environments becomes dulled as people fasten their gaze on the charismatic figure or the chain of command for direction. Focusing upward, people lose touch with their communities, markets, and personal resources. (p. 66)

This is just why Mills (1959) posits the value of the sociological imagination, to avoid this tendency in people so that they might be or become free, voluntary, informed, responsible, and skilled in their understanding of the social system's true design. Those
in authority, then, can be the cause of the malaise, or they can lead in such a way that people become capable of, in Heifetz’s language, adapting to the reality that they come to better understand. Leaders provide followers with a moral service when they help them do this “adaptive work.”

Berry Advises Leaders in the Establishment of Healthy Values

I would like to briefly revisit the seven ways that values are used in the literature. In laying them beside the works of Wendell Berry, I found that he uses each of them in his thinking and writing. I have drawn out some interpretive suggestions for how he might guide those who use values in these seven ways:

1. Values identify what is important to leaders and followers.
2. Values define boundaries leaders must work within, based on the social contract.
3. Values classify various contextual understandings of what is good so businesses and business leaders might behave within boundaries or commonly accepted norms.
4. Values promote healthy workplace relationship.
5. Values describe systemic inner-organizational
6. Values uphold a concern for long-term sustainability
7. Values justify organizational practices that have external implications on society and the environment.
Values Identify What Is Important to Leaders and Followers

Berry is clear about his values, and if given the opportunity, I believe he would advise leaders interested in the application of the agrarian thinking to be clear about such values as well. In his writing, Berry appeals to his reader-follower’s highest values (healthy living and healthy food, good character, freedom) and he fulfills the role of a transforming leader in persuasively inviting readers to a higher moral position.

His suggestion regarding the influence that exists between leaders and followers would be to “think little” and to make personal sacrifices:

If you are fearful of the destruction of the environment, then learn to quit being an environmental parasite. We all are, in one way or another, and the remedies are not always obvious, though they certainly will always be difficult. They require a new kind of life—harder, more laborious, poorer in luxuries and gadgets, but also, I am certain, richer in meaning and more abundant in real pleasure. . . . To be fearful of the disease and yet unwilling to pay for the cure is not just to be hypocritical; it is to be doomed. If you talk a good line without being changed by what you say, then you are not just hypocritical and doomed; you have become an agent of the disease. (Berry, 1972, pp. 81, 82)

In order for leaders to influence followers (and vise versa), they should do things that are consistent with the value-shift underway. The things they do can be small things but they should be consequential and communicate a willingness to pay the price. Berry suggests growing a garden. In so doing, he says, “we will begin to understand and to mistrust and to change our wasteful economy” (p. 84). That kind of corporate leader may surprise a lot of people!

Values Define Boundaries Leaders Must Work Within, Based on the Social Contract

Berry resonates with the fundamental idea of a social contract. A common commitment to a common community is good. It is healthy. However, as it has now
materialized, Berry would hope to add a contract with nature as well. But adding this
element changes everything. The contract can no longer be satisfied with financial profit
for owners, benefits for workers, and savings for customers. It now, by definition, must
include health, for without an ongoing obligation to healthy places, the contract with
nature would be broken.

In light of the interlocking system of dependence, any exploitation of land, water,
and air will also affect the original social contract with people. To say this another way,
a contract with nature will bring a total improvement. Now, owners will be significant
contributors to an overall healthy economy. Employees will find new meaning as they
work with a kind of integrity they may not have enjoyed before. And customers—though
they may complain that “the food doesn’t taste as good” or that they would rather drive
across three cities than walk to the local market or that the eradication of cheap toys and
flashy packaging on cereal boxes has their kids complaining at the breakfast table—will
(one hopes) eventually be grateful that they feel better, look better, and are better.

Johnson & Johnson’s (1997-2005) famous Credo includes all four members of
this suggested contract. The third paragraph illustrates how they state their contract with
nature.)

We believe our first responsibility is to the doctors, nurses and patients,
to mothers and fathers and all others who use our products and services....
Our suppliers and distributors must have an opportunity
to make a fair profit.

We are responsible to our employees,
the men and women who work with us throughout the world....
Everyone must be considered as an individual.

We are responsible to the communities in which we live and work
and to the world community as well.
We must be good citizens—support good works and charities

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and bear our fair share of taxes.
We must encourage civic improvements and better health and education.

We must maintain in good order
the property we are privileged to use,
protecting the environment and natural resources.

Our final responsibility is to our stockholders.
Business must make a sound profit. . . .

(Johnson & Johnson, 1997-2005, p. 1, emphasis supplied)

As great as this Credo is, Berry would still want to remind Johnson & Johnson’s leaders, in the same way that he advises conservationists, “We must learn to see that every problem that concerns us . . . always leads straight to the question of how we live. The world is being destroyed, no doubt about it, by the greed of the rich and powerful. It is also being destroyed by popular demand” (1993, p. 32). He believes that hope for success—hope for health—must begin with changes in private life.

Values Classify Various Contextual Understandings of What Is Good so Businesses and Business Leaders Might Behave Within Boundaries of Commonly Accepted Norms

Earlier I noted that within any social system, there are a minimum of three public contexts that speak to the notion of what is good: historic, moral, and popular. Reading Berry as a model for the implanting of agrarian values reveals his appeal to all three contexts.

Historically, Berry calls us to remember a number of heroic spokesmen. They include such American leaders as agrarian Thomas Jefferson. But he also calls upon the literary history of Virgil and Homer. These ancient writers provide grounding to the benefits and goodness of home, farm, and work. Shakespeare, Milton, Alexander Pope, and William Carlos Williams are other literary greats he calls on to describe good
agriculture, good communities, and good character. Berry’s historic voices also include agricultural spokesmen such as Sir Alfred Howard and Liberty Hyde Bailey.

He also forthrightly calls his readers to value local history and the memory of those who have lived here before. Storytelling is a practice he endorses. He notes,

> When a community loses its memory, its members no longer know each other. How can they know one another if they have forgotten or have never learned one another’s stories? If they do not know one another’s stories, how can they know whether or not to trust one another? People who do not trust one another do not help one another, and moreover they fear one another. (Berry, 1990, p. 157)

Thirty-three-year-old CEO David Armstrong (1992) is president of the family business. He knows the value of stories in passing on values. He believes they are

> an excellent way to pass along corporate tradition. The stories a company tells show what it believes in, and the stories also implicitly instruct people in how they should behave. . . . Storytelling is a much simpler and more effective way to manage. . . . The story gives people our guidelines, and then it is up to them. Storytelling promotes self-management. (pp. 8, 11)

Or, as John Gardner (1990) has said,

> Values are embodied in the society’s religious beliefs and its secular philosophy. Over the past century, many intellectuals have looked down on the celebration of our values as an unsophisticated and often hypocritical activity. But every healthy society celebrate its values. They are expressed in art, in song, in ritual. They are started explicitly in historical documents, in ceremonial speeches, in textbooks. They are reflected in stories told around the campfire, in the legends kept alive by old folks, in the fables told to children. (p. 13)

Throughout his writings, Berry also calls upon a commonly agreed upon conception of moral goodness. He connects words such as humility, integrity, character, fidelity, and love with land care. He makes explicit the connections among culture, character, and agriculture.

Finally, he critiques popular value notions of, for example, ease and consumptive entertainment. Berry respects people and values their importance tremendously, but he
harshly critiques the mind-set of the consumer. He shows an awareness of the values of popular culture, but not so that he might cater to it—as industrial marketing does—but so that he might offer a moral corrective.

Values Promote Healthy Workplace Relationships

Of real help to leaders here is Berry’s notion of “membership.” Membership describes the mutually necessary commitments that local neighbors have with one another. Applied here, a business that is imagined as a neighborhood membership may have a better shot at collaborative teams, common objectives, and informal mentoring.

In membership, no one works for anyone else. Rather, they work with one another toward their common commitment to independence and health. There is no idealizing such a community. It would be impossible to describe it in any way that appeared perfect. Jayber Crow, the Port William town barber, defines it this way:

I had been the barber in Port William for fourteen years by then. . . . My mind had begun to sink into the place. This was a feeling. It had grown into me from what I had learned at my work and all I had heard from Mat Feltner and the others who were the community’s rememberers, and from what I remembered myself. . . .

[I had] a vision of the gathered community. What I saw now was the community imperfect and irresolute but held together by the frayed and always fraying, incomplete and yet ever holding bonds of the various sorts of affection. There had maybe never been anybody who had not been loved by somebody, who had been loved by somebody else, and so on and on. . . . It was a community always disappointed in itself, disappointing its members, always trying to contain its division and gentle its meanness, always failing and yet always preserving a sort of will toward goodwill. I knew that, in the midst of all the ignorance and error, this was a membership; it was the membership of Port William and of no other place on earth. (Berry, 2000a, pp. 204, 205)

Healthy workplace relationships are honest about who they are as a group and who each person is as an individual. They are chosen in light of agreed-upon values and then they choose to contribute to the work of bringing those values to life.
Values Describe Systemic Inner-organizational Ideals

Berry’s idea of membership would not be sufficient if there was not mention of partnerships between cities and rural areas, to give just one example. The idea of values describing an individual organization on its best day should be broadened to ask what a local community of friends or a network of businesses would look like together on their best day. The idea is to put value on collaborative networks working side-by-side in peace. Berry writes with a wish for many small businesses to act in common fidelity with their local community. Business theory is slowly coming around to these kinds of ideas (Lipnack & Stamps, 1994).

Furthermore, Berry makes frequent mention of the irony that the “free market” is defined so that many people, most perhaps, do not really end up free at all. Wal-Mart, for example, is an example of a business whose bigness and self-centeredness creates exploitive tendencies (Quinn, 2005). This is true, regardless of whether Sam Walton’s three principles of success are “have respect for the individual, give service to our customers and strive for excellence” (WalMart, 2005).

Values Uphold a Concern for Long-term Corporate Sustainability

How would Berry recommend that an organization pursue personal sustainability? Assuming it is an organization contributing toward social and ecological health, he would probably concur with Jim Collins and Jerry Porras who, in their book Built to Last (Collins & Porras, 1994), talk about the care given in planning for succession. For Berry, sustainability is not just the way he personally works the land. It is also the work of preparing farm-raised kids to inherit and work the land. “If we want a decent food...
economy and a decent rural landscape,” he says, “we have got to find the ways to prepare and encourage our farm children to grow up to be farmers” (Berry, 1999, p. 41).

Sustainability implies work well done and apprenticeship. In his 1982 Sabbath poem, #VI, Berry recounts a walk with his son:

We have walked so many times, my boy,
over these old fields given up
to thicket, have thought
and spoken of their possibilities,
their and ours, ours and theirs the same,
so many times.

There are two healings: nature’s
and ours and nature’s. Nature’s
will come in spite of us, after us,
over the graves of its wasters, as it comes
to the forsaken fields. The healing
that is ours and nature’s will come
if we are willing, if we are patient,
if we know the way, if we will do the work.

(Berry, 1998b, pp. 45-48)

There are a series of things worth noting in Berry’s poem to his son, who would have been in his twenties upon receiving these words. Berry recalls, fondly, their mutual time and work on the land. He assumes that nature intends to make a contribution to their life and character. He also assumes that this will take a while. Finally, he assumes his son’s fidelity to the land will continue along with and beyond his own. The implication is that he trusts his son to continue the work that he has learned and done with his father.

There is much there for business leaders. But a further example comes in the way that Berry highlights the value of decentralized local economies. Here again there must be trust and mutual commitment to the well-being of a place over time. The selfless leader, who is thinking beyond his own ego and check book economics, will trust teams
who are working closest to the work to make their own decisions and function in the most effective ways.

Values Justify Organizational Practices That Have External Implications on Society and the Environment

Most businesses say that they do “just one thing.” I am sympathetic with that, though I have come to see that doing so is impossible. A major theme for Berry is that one can never do just one thing. He is critical, for example, of movements that one might otherwise expect him to endorse (such as organic farming or the preservation of watersheds). Berry (2003) says that movements often become too specialized, as if they cannot help taking refuge in the pinhole vision of the industrial intellectuals. They almost always fail to be radical enough, dealing finally in effects rather than causes. Or they deal with single issues or single solutions, as if to assure themselves that they will not be radical enough. (pp. 44, 45)

The leaders of the new socially minded organizations (and there are more and more of them) need to think not only about throwing money to charities. They also need to look at the implications of their focused specialty (from resource allocation, to manufacturing processes, to marketing, to use, to waste) and consider if there is any way to work toward the improvement of society and the environment.

Conclusion

Our postmodern culture, and especially—perhaps—business culture, uses the values concept in a variety of ways. They are all useful, but also incomplete by themselves mostly because the term has economic and non-economic applications. Something can have value (that is tangible) or be a value (that is usually intangible). It is the normal propensity of profit-oriented business to connect them (only) when intangible
value contributes to tangible value. The reality, however, is that “almost every manager can find himself or herself in situations in which a commitment to important intangibles directly conflicts with short-term performance or profits. Being right and being profitable are not always the same thing” (Badaracco & Ellsworth, 1989, p. 194).

Berry has shown that proper evaluation of intangibles can have economic results. He illustrates this in essays such as “Can Community Have Value?” (Berry, 1987) which he answers in the affirmative. He also speaks of what is valuable that may not be possible to account for economically but that undoubtedly contributes toward economic results. I am convinced that Berry would want leaders who hope to be sensible about values to remember our larger debts. He would want us to embed the convictions—that will guide and discipline our behavioral choices—that we are debtors to the land that gives us food, to those whose good work sustains the land and brings in the harvest, to generations yet unborn, as well as the debt of restraint to that which we encounter but do not understand.

There are those who would say that “for-profit” business should do what it does well (make money) and leave social and ecological issues to nonprofits (the YMCA, Greenpeace, and the Sierra Club, for example) and individual households (“Don’t forget to recycle your plastic milk jug . . .”). The problem is that when leaders endorse such a policy, people are forced to live with dissonant values, inauthentic character, or even outright hypocrisy. Good leaders will recognize their moral responsibility to those they influence. They will use foresight and adaptive work within their context so that members of the organization—which is part of the overall social system—will see unhealthy patterns. Good leaders will serve these people and the society at large by
aiming attention at value contradictions and conflicts and in working with people to resolve their deep-seated confusion. Good leaders create a culture of empowerment in which people can make changes in light of what is good and valuable, without the fear of recrimination for doing the right thing.

In chapter 6, I will present a Readers Theatre dialogue that illustrates the conflict between Berry’s moral ideology and the thinking of many popular business researchers and practitioners.
CHAPTER 6

WENDELL BERRY AT THE LEADERSHIP ROUNDTABLE:
A READERS THEATRE PROGRAM

Berry in Dramatic Form

I have chosen to present some of Berry's thinking on values in the form of a Readers Theatre. Though I do not find Berry himself using this form, he does have at least two dramatic presentations in his books of poetry. "The Bringer of Water" (Berry, 1970, pp. 66-97) is a sort of sequel to A Place on Earth (Berry, 2001) in which war-widow Hannah Feltner and Nathan Coulter begin a fragile courtship toward each other. More recently, in a piece entitled "Sonata at Payne Hollow" (Berry, 2005, pp. 39-50), Berry uses the form of a script to depict a conversation between the ghosts of two people, once real, Harlan and Anna Hubbard (Berry, 1990a). In both pieces, Berry sets the scene and gives stage directions. Another contribution, called "The Birth (Near Port William)" (Berry, 1970, pp. 50-54), is in the form of a poem, but its content is a dramatic narrative. While it is not scripted, there is a narrator and it could be read as a script. The approach that follows integrates quotations from Berry's many essays with quotations from scholars and leaders in the literature of business and organizations (see Hunter-Welborn, 2000, for a similar approach involving a conversation among key historic
philosopher/economists). The script takes the form of an interview in which an 
Interviewer asks questions and solicits responses from both Berry and the scholars.

Readers Theatre as Representational Methodology

Though, from a methodological perspective, I might be said to be “re-presenting” 
the material in the writings of Berry and others, what I am crafting is properly called 
“presentational theatre.” It is not “representational theatre” in which “the world of the 
play is localized onstage, as a picture, and actors generally turn away from the audience 
toward the created environment” (Kleinau & McHughes, 1980, p. 6). The typical play is 
“representational” and occurs in “pictorial space.” Readers Theatre is “presentational 
theatre,” which

lives most fully in acoustic space. Readers Theatre is dedicated to featuring 
language, using the spoken word to stimulate imaginative sensory responses. Seeing, 
in Readers Theatre, comes primarily as a result of hearing, a phenomenon that has led 
some practitioners of Readers Theatre to refer to the form as “Theatre of the Mind.” 
(pp. 6, 7)

A form such as this is useful when there is an abundance of textual content. “Readers 
theatre is a simple, yet rich alternative for the presentation of qualitative research 
information. . . . It seeks to transform passive delivery of information into a sense-making 
participatory reflexion” (Bastidas, 2001, p. 11). Paget (1995) argues for the value of 
“ethnoperformance” (p. 242). It is, she says, “native, artful, subtle, imaginative, 
interpretive, and dialogical. Above all, it is alive” (p. 242). She says that the usual 
settings in which research is reported 

usually keep us in the conceptual realm, producing a conceptual and abstract science. 
Our meetings do not intend to invoke or produce experience but suppress 
involvement, emotion, and imagination—thus the brief, badly read presentations, the 
endless abstractions, and the boredom. (p. 231)
Scripting Berry and the Leadership Scholars

The literary source options for Readers Theatre include “plays, novels, stories, letters, diaries, essays, poems, songs” and more (Kleinau & McHughes, 1980, p. 19). To the question, “What literary works have forced you to put them down and think, have jabbed you, have caressed you, have enticed you to enter an unknown world?” (p. 19), I would answer: Wendell Berry’s essays. I have accepted, therefore, “the special opportunity of ‘collaborating’ with the author to make [my] work a faithful reflection of the original” and to “respect the text and preserve the author’s intentions as fully as possible” (Adams, 2003, pp. 3, 4).

In addition to collecting some of the keenest quotations of Berry’s that I could find, I was challenged to identify correlating quotations from the scholars of leadership. While I had become quite familiar with the literature of my research, I found that this literary challenge often felt like the proverbial snipe hunt. In choosing “The Composite Script,” I committed to “a program composed of several pieces that focus on a theme, author, issue” and it was “important, therefore, to establish a strong unity when . . . selecting various materials” (Adams, 2003, p. 25). My theme is Wendell Berry’s values, and my dramatic intent is to portray how his ideas fare in conversation with those who share mostly contrary values. There are occasional quotations from authors who agree with Berry or at least lean in the general direction of his values. The texts of these sympathizers were important to help the audience not completely discount the radical nature of Berry’s insights.

It also became necessary to create the role of The Interviewer to aid in building needed connections between Berry and the others as well as to point to key thematic
transitions. I took on the role of Interviewer authentically because the questions he asks are the basic questions that led me to this study in the first place. The Interviewer is, in part, like the "narrator" in Chamber Theatre in that he is "present and highly visible onstage, at the center of the action . . . not on the periphery watching the activity" (Lee & Gura, 1982, p. 409).

My narrator—as an Interviewer—however, is at the mercy of the unfolding dialogue. He is, therefore, not exactly "responsible for moving the story along in terms of action and pace" (Lee & Gura, 1982, p. 409). Only in part is he "the one who governs the selectivity of the story by indicating where the audience should look and by conditioning the listeners' responses to the characters" (p. 410). He may be described as the first-person narrator by way of function, but he is the participant-Interviewer by way of role.

Two Presentational Options

I have broken my script into five scenes for a more formal dramatic presentation. It should be remembered that the audience for a Readers Theatre would have different expectations than an audience coming to hear a traditional research summary. "The audience comes to experience the performance, comes with an aesthetic sensibility, and the desire to experiment with new ways of knowing and experiencing" (Paget, 1995, p. 241). Therefore, I have organized the script for theatre. The staging instructions call for a simple set, costumes, voice changes, and multimedia support.

However, this more traditional option should not put a limit on the possibilities. Lee and Gura (1982) say "there is no recipe for a Readers Theatre program. . . . Our contemporary notions about Readers Theatre are flexible and accommodating" (p. 405).
When I think about how the script that follows would be best utilized, I am most inclined to the model used by Bastidas (2001) in his script that compiled interviews of women in Ecuadorian jails accused of drug trafficking. In his case, “readers and audience are one” (p. 19) which, for my purposes, would mean a minimal use of stage instructions. Bastidas also considered “time devoted to open conversation and comments” (p. 19) in developing his program.

For this option, I imagine a group of leaders gathered together (sitting around either a formal conference table or around a campfire) and divvying up the roles. Some could take more than one role, if necessary, as some of the quoted scholars have but one or two lines. I would assign the role of Interviewer to the most “teachable” person in the room and the role of Berry to the person who has no ax to grind, someone the group would tend to listen to. At the end of Scene 1 and at the conclusion of each subsequent scene, the “curtain goes down” and the stage is open for dialogue. Since my chosen text(s) are academic and sometimes quite lengthy, engagement and pause would be effective for those processing the ideas.

**The Script**

**The Cast**

This script is designed for a cast of eight players. The italicized roles below are more or less major roles and the rest are minor readings. The minor readings have therefore been combined as follows: whoever reads for “A Consultant [1]” subsequently reads all the texts for [1], and likewise for [2] and [3]. The readers should creatively consider how they can “change their persona” from one reading to another. Perhaps simple costume changes, such as a tie or hat would help. They should also consider using
their voice to communicate a new person in the interview. A list of the cast members follows:

*Interviewer*

A Consultant [1]

Another Consultant [2]

Yet Another Consultant [3]

*Wendell Berry*

*The Professor*

A Sociologist [1]

A Researcher [2]

*An Ethicist*

A Futurist [1]

An Eco-Consultant [2]

A Teacher [3]

Another Eco-Consultant [2]

The Evil CEO [1]

The Good CEO [2]

Leadership Scholar [1]

Another Leadership Scholar [2]

Yet Another Leadership Scholar [3]

Another Professor [1]

Still Another Consultant [2]

Another Futurist [1]
Production Directions

*A spotlight shines down on the far right end of a long conference table. A
casually dressed man is there, fumbling with a stack of papers and a tape recorder. He is
going ready for an interview. At the other end of the table, not yet seen, is Wendell
Berry. He is dressed nicely, not like the stereotypical “hick” farmer. He has no tie, but a
plain suit coat.*

*Behind the table, on a large screen, are visual images of magazine covers. They
are popular magazines of business interspersed with covers of agricultural periodicals.
The topics are about ethics, greed, environmental issues, farming concerns, and business
leaders.*

*As the interview proceeds, images correspond to the readings. There will be
images of farms in healthy and diseased states, leaders appearing greedy and
narcissistic, as well as leaders in postures of listening and engaged with others in
teamwork. There will be pictures of consumer culture in action and pictures of people
with their sleeves rolled up as they work in their gardens.*
At the start of Scene 1, the readers are seated (in the dark, until their time to read) from one end of the table to the other as per the following visual example (I = Interviewer; WB = Wendell Berry; X = the other readers):

I X X X X X X WB

Scene 1: Values in a Society of Specialist Organizations

Interviewer: I’m here today with Wendell Berry and a slew of well-known corporate business leaders and scholars. We want to talk about the matter of values in the workplace. Particularly, I have in mind the matter of values for those who provide leadership in our cultural organizations.

But first we need to set the context and talk about social values, that is, the worldview convictions that hold us, our culture, and our organizations to a certain way of living here in America. Who wants to start us off with insight on our so-called “American dream”?

A Consultant: The phrase “American Dream”... embodies a mesh of feelings and beliefs, some of them contradictory, well known to Americans and to everyone else in the world. This myth influences goals in business and daily life, and values passed on to our children... Values such as individualism and materialism are woven into the fabric of the mythos (Schwartz, 1991, p. 39).

Another Consultant: [This is also true of] the formal structures of many organizations in postindustrial society (Bell 1973). [They] dramatically reflect the myths of their institutional environments instead of the demands of their work activities (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 531).

The elements of rationalized formal structure are deeply ingrained in, and reflect, widespread understandings of social reality. Many of the positions, policies, programs and procedures of modern organizations are enforced by public opinion, by the views of important constituents, by knowledge legitimated through the educational system, by social prestige, by the laws, and by the definitions of negligence and prudence used by the courts (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 533).

Interviewer: Mr. Consultant, you have done a lot of work on values.

Yet Another Consultant: Many... cultural researchers prefer the concept of “basic values” for [a culture’s] deepest levels... My preference is for “basic assumptions” because these tend to be taken for granted and are treated as nonnegotiable. Values can be and are discussed, and people can agree to disagree about them. Basic
assumptions are so taken for granted that someone who does not hold them is viewed as
crazy and automatically dismissed (Schein, 1992, p. 16). Basic assumptions . . . tend to
be those we neither confront nor debate and hence are extremely difficult to change (p.
22). Unconscious assumptions sometimes lead to ridiculously tragic situations (p. 24).

**Interviewer:** Mr. Berry, can you tell us what you identify as some of the
dominant cultural values (or, assumptions) in America? (Perhaps you can illustrate how
that relates to your concerns with agricultural and local communities.)

*The light goes up on Berry. Once it does, it stays up. His reactions to the other readers
are an important part of the program.*

**Berry:** [I see that our people and our leaders alike have adopted] industrial
values, which are based on three assumptions:

1. That value equals price—that the value of a farm, for example, is whatever it
would bring on sale. . . .
2. That all relations are mechanical. That a farm, for example, can be used like a
factory, because there is no essential difference between a farm and a factory.
3. That the sufficient and definitive human motive is competitiveness—that a
community, for example, can be treated like a resource or a market, because there
is no difference between a community and a resource or a market. (Berry, 1987, p.
168)

We are . . . an exceedingly destructive people, and our destructions are . . . carried
out, as they have been from the beginning, on the assumption that the earth is
inexhaustible, and that we, the predestined children of abundance, are infallible (Berry,
2004a, p. 45).

**Interviewer:** Max DePree has said, “The first responsibility of a leader is to
define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between the two, the leader must become
a servant and a debtor” (DePree, 1989, p. 9). He also once told Peter Drucker that “every
organization, in order to be healthy, to have renewal processes, to survive, has to be in
touch with reality” (Drucker, 1990, p. 40). Let’s start there: Mr. Professor and Mr. Berry,
how do you define reality?

**The Professor:** Society in all developed countries has become a society of
organizations in which most, if not all, social tasks are being done in and by an
organization (Drucker, 1994, p. 49). [And] an organization is always specialized. It is
defined by its task. Community and society, by contrast, are defined by a bond that holds
together human beings, whether language, culture, history, or locality. An organization is
effective only if it concentrates on one task (p. 48).

**Berry:** The disease of the modern character is specialization. Looked at from the
standpoint of the social system, the aim of specialization may seem desirable enough.
The aim is to see that the responsibilities of government, law, medicine, engineering,
agriculture, education, etc., are given into the hands of the most skilled, best prepared people. The difficulties do not appear until we look at specialization from the opposite standpoint—that of individual persons. We then begin to see the grotesquity—indeed, the impossibility—of an idea of community wholeness that divorces itself from any idea of personal wholeness (Berry, 1997, p. 19).

Specialization is thus seen to be a way of institutionalizing, justifying, and paying highly for a calamitous disintegration and scattering-out of the various functions of character: workmanship, care, conscience, responsibility (p. 19).

**The Professor:** Knowledges by themselves are sterile. They become productive only if welded together into a single, unified knowledge. To make this possible is the task of organization, the reason for its existence, its function....

Specialists need exposure to the universe of knowledge. But they need to work as specialists, and to concentrate, on being specialists. And for this to produce results, an organization is needed (Drucker, 1993, p. 50).

**Berry:** The system of specialization requires the abdication to specialists of various competencies and responsibilities that were once personal and universal. Thus, the average—one is tempted to say, the ideal—American citizen now consigns the problem of food production to agriculturalists and "agribusinessmen," the problem of health to doctors and sanitation experts, the problems of education to school teachers and educators, the problems of conservation to conservationists, and so on. This supposedly fortunate citizen is therefore left with only two concerns: making money and entertaining himself. He earns money, typically, as a specialist, working an eight-hour day at a job for the quality or consequences of which somebody else—or, perhaps more typically, nobody else—will be responsible. And not surprisingly, since he can do so little else for himself, he is even unable to entertain himself, for there exists an enormous industry of exorbitantly expensive specialists whose purpose is to entertain him (Berry, 1997, pp. 19, 20).

**A Sociologist:** Industrialism means that man may be tied to only one task. He may live in comfort and not have to worry greatly about medical care, transportation, or what he will do on his vacation. He has many opportunities, many choices—although the very fact of choice may create a psychological burden for him.

In *The Division of Labor*, Durkheim concludes that specialization is good, natural, and moral, and that it should not be opposed. He believes it will bring new values and new forms of organization to replace the social disorganization of his time, and he proposes to aid this process by a system of regulative corporations or occupational groups. It is difficult to know just what he really has in mind—seemingly a cross between an American labor union and the American Medical Association. In any case, he concentrates on the unity of society, what holds it together, and lets the question of autonomy, individual freedom, slide out of the picture.
His concern with unity becomes transmuted into a question of human values, shared expectations, and of the nature of the moral order (Means, 1970, p. 30).

Interviewer: Already, I see some major differences in this discussion about reality. Each having some validity, talk then about the values of reality within our Western culture and, perhaps, where they came from.

A Sociologist: As Durkheim makes quite clear, society cannot be explained simply by fundamental economic or psychological order. Subjective value orientations are also important aspects of social reality because they have objective results and are part of the social order. . . . The unity of society is destroyed when one does not think of the long-term effects of economic exploitation or of consistently placing private above public interest. If such actions became universal, society would fly apart by centrifugal force. It is shared values that hold society together. Indeed, the value system and society become synonymous. And, above all, they become an “objective reality” (Means, 1970, p. 31).

A Researcher: Most societies harbor within themselves not just one conception but an array of beliefs or theories as to what constitutes the good life. . . . When one conception from among this array eventually wins a wider following than the others, and is assimilated by more and more individuals in the course of their maturation, it becomes modal. In fact [as A Sociologist has suggested], it eventually becomes the commonly accepted standard by which any person’s achievements can be judged successful or not and answers the question of what a society values most. This we shall call the focal value (Chamberlain, 1977, p. 6).

It is not surprising that the focal value which has swept the modern world is materialistic accumulation, or, more generally, consumption, which requires no special talents (p. 7).

Berry: A consumer is one who uses things up, a concept that is alien to the creation, as are the concepts of waste and disposability (Berry, 1972, p. 111).

The truth is that we Americans, all of us, have become a kind of human trash, living our lives in the midst of a ubiquitous damned mess of which we are at once the victims and the perpetrators. We are unwilling victims, perhaps; and some of us even are unwilling perpetrators, but we must count ourselves among the guilty nonetheless. In my household we produce much of our own food and try to do without as much frivolous “necessities” as possible—and yet, like everyone else, we must shop, and when we shop we must bring home a load of plastic, aluminum, and glass containers designed to be thrown away, and “appliances” designed to wear out quickly and be thrown away.

I confess I am angry at the manufacturers who make these things. There are days when I would be delighted if certain corporation executives could somehow be obliged to eat their products. I know of no good reason why these containers and all other forms of manufactured “waste”—solid, liquid, toxic, or whatever—should not be outlawed. There
is no sanity in objecting to the desecration of the flag while tolerating and justifying and encouraging as a daily business the desecration of the country for which it stands.

But our waste problem is not the fault only of producers. It is the fault of an economy that is wasteful from top to bottom—a symbiosis of an unlimited greed at the top and a lazy, passive, and self-indulgent consumptiveness at the bottom—and all of us are involved in it (Berry, 1990b, p. 127).

A Researcher: [Well said, Mr. Berry.] It is the major business institutions that have been the carriers of American values—values which they have fostered and under which they have thrived. But these same values too have become enmeshed with the American identity. They are an essential ingredient in the way Americans think about themselves. They have become a part of the national character. This is not some shabby trick or sinister conspiracy which business interests have put over on the people. On the contrary, business has been the leading edge of a way of life which Americans have found congenial (Chamberlain, 1977, p. 5).

An Ethicist: Herman Daley and John Cobb suggest that the economy consumes moral capital. In other words, the activity of commerce, in seeking the fulfillment of self-interest, in seeking profit and advantage, draws from but does not replenish the reservoir of social beliefs and goodwill (Dalla Costa, 1998, p. 125).

Interviewer: But are we, as a number of you have noted strongly in your writings, in a time of change? One of the changes being described is the move from an industrial to a postindustrial society. Is this true? Are we at the end of this era?

A Futurist: Today, as we look to the future, there is no certainty at all about where we are going or how to get there. We no longer see a long, straight freeway stretching into the horizon. Instead, we find ourselves staring at the end of the road! For the close of the twentieth century might be said to represent . . . the end of the industrial paradigm (Gibson, 1998, p. 3).

An Eco-Consultant: [On the other hand.] the industrial revolution that gave rise to modern capitalism greatly expanded the possibilities for the material development of humankind. It continues to do so today, but at a severe price (Hawken, Lovins, & Lovins, 1999, p. 2).

Teacher: We are approaching a major turning point in history—what Karl Jaspers referred to as an “axial point,” where some new height of vision is sought, where some fundamental redefinitions are required, where our table of values will have to be reviewed. We seek lives not measured solely in terms of income, societies not assessed on gasoline consumption, and freedom from that most beguiling and misleading of all valuations, the GNP (Bennis & Nanus, 1985, p. 13).

Interviewer: Mr. Berry, do you agree? Is this the end of the road? An “axial point”? Or just more of the same?
**Berry**: The longer the industrial economy lasts in its present form, the further it will demonstrate its ultimate impossibility: Every human in the world cannot, now or ever, own the whole catalogue of shoddy, high-energy industrial products, which cannot be sustainably made or used. Moreover, the longer the industrial economy lasts, the more it will eat away the possibility of a better economy (Berry, 2003a, p. 115).

**Interviewer**: Most of your work has been to point out the flaws in the industrial mind-set as opposed to your preferred agrarian mind-set. Spell out the difference please.

**Berry**: The fundamental difference between industrialism and agrarianism is this: Whereas industrialism is a way of thought based on monetary capital and technology, agrarianism is a way of thought based on land. Agrarianism, furthermore, is a culture at the same time that it is an economy. Industrialism is an economy before it is a culture. . . .

The agrarian mind is less interested in abstract quantities than in particular qualities. . . . It is interested—and forever fascinated—by questions leading toward the accomplishment of good work. . . .

An agrarian economy is always a subsistence economy before it is a market economy. The center of an agrarian farm is the household.

The agrarian mind begins with the love of fields and ramifies in good farming, good cooking, good eating, and gratitude to God. . . . The industrial-economic mind begins with ingratitude, and ramifies in the destruction of farms and forests (Berry, 2003a, pp. 116-118).

**Interviewer**: The Natural Step, an environmental group out of Sweden, says, “The practice of sustainability is about creating new ways to live and prosper while ensuring an equitable, healthy future for all people and the planet.” That idea has been getting a lot of press. Someone please speak to sustainability.

**Another Eco-Consultant**: At the core of sustainable development thinking is an increased emphasis on the value of the environment—the natural environment as well as the one created by human activity. Another fundamental notion is that the economy is not separate from the environment in which we live, that the health of each is dependent on the other. In other words, the environment’s carrying capacity must be as fundamental a component of business decisions as are cash flow, market demand, and raw-material availability (Makower, 1993, p. 55).
Scene 2: The Purpose of Business in Local Culture

At the start of this scene, the readers are seated from one end of the table to the other as per the following visual example (I = Interviewer; WB = Wendell Berry; X = the other readers):

\[ X \ I \ X \ X \ X \ X \ WB \ X \]

**Interviewer:** So we can't really talk about business leadership until we have discussed the economic philosophy of business. Mr. Berry, before we hear your ideas, let's throw it to the table.

**The “Evil” CEO:** [Loudly] The point of business is to make a profit. Profit, gentlemen, is not a dirty word... The responsibility of the CEO is to deliver shareholder value. Period. It's the shareholders who own the corporation. They take all the risk. And how does the CEO maximize value? He does that by focusing on profit. But how does he get profit? By making the best products, by building the best facilities, by having the best workforce, by globalizing his company. And, yes, sometimes you have to get rid of people (Al Dunlap, cited in Tough et al., 1996, ¶11, 14).

**An Eco-Consultant:** [Quietly] The past two hundred years of massive growth in prosperity and manufactured capital have been accompanied by a prodigious body of economic theory analyzing it, all based on the fallacy that natural and human capital have little value as compared to final output. In the standard industrial model, the creation of value is portrayed as a linear sequence of extraction, production, and distribution: Raw materials are introduced. (Enter nature, stage left.) Labor uses technologies to transform these resources into products, which are sold to create profits. The wastes from production processes, and soon the products themselves, are somehow disposed of somewhere else. (Exit waste, stage right.) The “somewheres” in this scenario are not the concern of classical economics: Enough money can buy enough resources, so the theory goes, and enough “elsewheres” to dispose of them afterward (Hawken et al., 1999, p. 7).

**Berry:** We face a choice that is starkly simple: we must change or be changed. If we fail to change for the better, then we will be changed for the worse. We cannot blunder our way into health by the same sad and foolish hopes by which we have blundered into disease. We must see that the standardless aims of industrial communism and industrial capitalism equally have failed. The aims of productivity, profitability, efficiency, limitless growth, limitless wealth, limitless power, limitless mechanization and automation can enrich and empower the few (for a while), but they will sooner or later ruin us all. The gross national product and the corporate bottom line are utterly meaningless as measures of the prosperity or health of the country.

If we want to succeed in our dearest aims and hopes as people, we must understand that we cannot proceed any further without standards, and we must see that ultimately the standards are not set by us but by nature. We must see that it is foolish,
sinful, and suicidal to destroy the health of nature for the sake of an economy that is really not an economy at all but merely a financial system, one that is unnatural, undemocratic, sacrilegious, and ephemeral. We must see the error of our effort to live by fire, by burning the world in order to live in it. There is no plainer symptom of our insanity than our avowed intention to maintain by fire an unlimited economic growth. Fire destroys what nourishes it and so in fact imposes severe limits on any growth associated with it. The true source and analogue of our economic life is the economy of plants, which never exceeds natural limits, never grows beyond the power of its place to support it, produces no waste, and enriches and preserves itself by death and decay. We must learn to grow like a tree, not like a fire. (Berry, 1993, p. 12, 13).

**Interviewer:** [Pointing] You sir, are a good CEO. How do you see things at your company?

**The “Good” CEO:** Don’t get me wrong—I’m in business to make money. But that’s not my only goal. I believe that the conventional, sole focus of maximizing gains for shareholders strips away that part of ourselves that needs to thrive. Something in us wants to endure beyond retained earnings, and that something is our soul. . . . [My company] fits its commitment to the common good into its business strategy without undermining profits. If you nurture the soul of your business, not only can you compete with the biggest players in the game, you will add meaning to your work and make a real contribution to society (Chappell, 1993, p. xv).

**Interviewer:** What then is the purpose of the organization within society? How does the organization relate to and function as part of society?

**The Professor:** Society, community, family are all conserving institutions. They try to maintain stability and to prevent, or at least to slow down change. But the organization of the post-capitalist society of organizations is a destabilizer. Because its function is to put knowledge to work—on tools, processes, and products; on work; on knowledge itself—it must be organized for constant change. It must be organized for innovation; and innovation, as the Austro-American economist Joseph Schumpeter (1883-1950) said, is “creative destruction” (Drucker, 1994, p. 57).

Organizations in the post-capitalist society thus constantly upset, disorganize, and destabilize the community. . . . [Every change they bring] upsets the community, disrupts it, deprives it of continuity. Every one is perceived as unfair. Every one destabilizes (Drucker, 1994, pp. 60, 61).

**Berry:** What happens under [this] rule of specialization is that, though society becomes more and more intricate, it has less and less structure. It becomes more and more organized, but less and less orderly. The community disintegrates because it loses the necessary understandings, forms, and enactments of the relations among materials and processes, principles and actions, ideals and realities, past and present, present and future, men and women, body and spirit, city and country, civilization and wilderness, growth and decay, life and death—just as the individual character loses the sense of a
responsible involvement in these relations. No longer does human life rise from the earth like a pyramid, broadly and considerately founded upon its sources. Now it scatters itself out in a reckless horizontal sprawl, like a disorderly city whose suburbs and pavements destroy the fields (Berry, 1997, p. 21).

**Interviewer:** So who decides the organization’s purpose and values? Do they decide independently or is the community somehow involved?

**The Professor:** Modern organization creates . . . [a] tension for the community. It has to operate in a community. Its members live in that community, speak its language, send their children to its schools, vote in it, pay taxes to it. They have to feel at home in it—their results are in the community. Yet the organization cannot submerge itself in the community or subordinate itself to that community. Its “culture” has to transcend community. . . . Every knowledge organization is of necessity non-national, non-community. Even if totally embedded in the local community, it is a ‘rootless cosmopolitan,’ to use one of Hitler’s and Stalin’s favorite epithets.

It is the nature of the task that determines the culture of an organization, rather than the community in which that task is being performed. Each organization’s value system is determined by its task. . . . In its culture, the organization always transcends the community. If an organization’s culture clashes with the values of its community, the organization’s culture will prevail—or else the organization will not make its social contribution (Drucker, 1994, pp. 61, 62).

**Berry:** Our culture must be our response to our place, our culture and our place are images of each other and inseparable from each other, and so neither can be better than the other. Because by definition they lack any such sense of mutuality or wholeness, our specializations subsist on conflict with one another. The rule is never to cooperate, but rather to follow one’s own interest as far as possible. Checks and balances are all applied externally, by opposition, never by self-restraint. Labor, management, the military, the government, etc., never forbear until their excesses arouse enough opposition to force them to do so. The good of the whole of Creation, the world and all its creatures together, is never a consideration, because it is never thought of; our culture now simply lacks the means for thinking of it. It is for this reason that none of our basic problems is ever solved (Berry, 1997, p. 22).

**Interviewer:** Mr. Berry, how is your vision for the health of land and communities going to come about? Do we need laws to enforce what you are suggesting?

**Berry:** No one, I think, welcomes the intervention of federal powers in the affairs of a state, except as a last resort. That seems the crudest of solutions. It is not a moral solution at all. In being forced to do what is right, men lose the dignity of being right. The right itself is debased as an aim and incentive. . . . The closer to home the correction is made, the better it is—the more moral it is (Berry, 2004a, p. 22).
The Ethicist: For thousands of years, as long as there have been laws, there has also been a set of ethics guiding the community's behavior. The two are complementary but not redundant. Laws emerge largely by precedent, whereas ethics derive from moral belief. Laws create authority by the threat of punishment, whereas ethics are usually an expression of principle that engages individuals at the deeper level of identity and belonging. The focus of laws is compliance, while the focus of ethics is human character and community development (Dalla Costa, 1998, p. 107).

Berry: It is preposterous to suppose that character could be cultivated by any sort of public program. Persons of character are not public products. They are made by local cultures, local responsibilities. That we have so few such persons does not suggest that we ought to start character workshops in the schools (Berry, 1990b, p. 26).

Men do not often obey mechanically; then tend to be good only insofar as they understand goodness. . . . If the rules are to apply and be observed, they must not only be written and publicized and learned, but understood, felt, accommodated to the particularities of the lives of particular people. . . . There must be a renewal of the wisdom that comes with knowing clearly the pain and the pleasure and the risk and the responsibility of being alive in this world (Berry, 1972, pp. 13, 14).

Interviewer: So, what’s the solution? Do we somehow challenge people to turn up their conscience?

The Ethicist: Fundamentally, conscience alone is not an effective guide for moral decision-making. Without the reference point of community moral values, personal conscience can all too easily slip into a relativism or subjectivity. . . . Society provides the coordinates and personal conscience provides the navigation. . . . Conscience alone is less than effective in moral decisions, not only for tending to egocentric misjudgment but because of all-too-frequent non-judgment (Dalla Costa, 1998, p. 111).

Berry: [Right. That’s why] the loss of local culture is, in part, a practical loss and an economic one. For one thing, such a culture contains, and conveys to succeeding generations, the history of the use of the place and the knowledge of how the place may be lived in and used. For another, the pattern of reminding implies affection for the place and respect for it, and so, finally the local culture will carry the knowledge of how the place may be well and lovingly used, and also the implicit command to use it only well and lovingly. The only true and effective “operator’s manual for spaceship earth” is not a book that any human will ever write, it is hundreds of thousands of local cultures (Berry, 1990b, p. 166).

Interviewer: I’m glad we’ve discussed the economic issue as foundation to our conversation about leadership. Leadership must start with a level of clarity on what people are being led toward, and perhaps away from. What we have been debating is a framework for life, hopefully a moral life, that leaders either consciously or passively enter into and then lead out from. Truly, leaders need a comprehensive moral framework if they are to serve as good leaders. The purposes, motives, and ways that are good for
all stakeholders need to be clarified. Leaders need to take into account the freedom and 
independence of individuals and families, as well as the health of communities and the 
land that sustains them.

Mr. Berry, I’m interested in your ideas about the transition in agriculture from a 
local work of families to the current dominance of corporate agribusinesses. Define 
reality for us and tell us what can be done.

**Berry:** In an age of unparalleled affluence and leisure, the American farmer is 
harder pressed and harder worked than ever before; his margin of profit is small, his 
hours are long; his outlays for land and equipment and the expenses of maintenance and 
operation are growing rapidly greater; he cannot compete with industry for labor; he is 
being forced more and more to depend on the use of destructive chemicals and on the 
wasteful methods of haste and anxiety. As a class, farmers are one of the despised 
minorities. So far as I can see, farming is considered marginal or incidental to the 
economy of the country, and farmers, when they are thought of at all, are thought of as 
hicks and yokels, whose lives do not fit into the modern scene. The average American 
farmer is now an old man whose sons have moved away to the cities. His knowledge, 
and his intimate connection with the land, are about to be lost. The small independent 
farmer is going the way of the small independent craftsmen and storekeepers. He is 
being forced off the land into the cities, his place taken by absentee owners, corporations, 
and machines. Some would justify all this in the name of efficiency. As I see it, it is an 
enormous social and economic cultural blunder. For the small farmers who lived on their 
farms cared about their land. And given their established connection to their land— 
which was often hereditary and traditional as well as economic—they could have been 
encouraged to care for it more competently than they have so far. The corporations and 
machines that replace them will never be bound to the land by the sense of birthright and 
continuity, or by the love that enforces care. They will be bound by the rule of 
efficiency, which takes thought only of the value of the year’s produce, and takes no 
thought of the slow increment of the life of the land, not measurable in pounds or dollars, 
which will assure the livelihood and the health of the coming generations (Berry, 1972, 
pp. 78, 79).

**Scene 3: The Tasks, Tragedies, and 
Temptations of Leadership**

*At the start of this scene, the readers are seated from one end of the table to the other as 
per the following visual example (I = Interviewer; WB = Wendell Berry; X = the other 
readers):*

\[ X X I X X WB X X \]

**Interviewer:** I think this gives us a good transition to the matter of leadership. In 
reading your essays, Mr. Berry, I know that you don’t put much hope in leaders, be they 
corporate, governmental, educational, or religious. But let’s assume there is a leader out
there, or a would-be leader, perhaps of a community-based small business. Private life and character are important to this person. Help me craft what he or she would be like, on the assumption that they resonate with your vision. First, I'd like to ask our Leadership Scholars to frame the idea of leadership for us.

**Leadership Scholar:** I define leadership as leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the value and the motivations—the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations—of both leaders and followers. And the genius of leadership lies in the manner in which leaders see and act on their own and their followers' values and motivations. . . . Transforming leadership . . . occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality (Burns, 1978, pp. 19, 20).

**Another Leadership Scholar:** [This kind of leadership] is not to be confused with the too common political practice of pandering to the base wishes of the lowest common denominator—promising whatever the masses think they want, even if that may be inherently evil. With regard to the base desires often expressed by the masses, President James Madison argued that although leaders must listen intently to the stated aspirations of followers, they must not become prisoners to these literal demands. Instead, leaders must “discern the true interests” of the public from their stated desires and learn to address the underlying needs that the people as a body are unable to articulate. Madison wrote that the effective democratic leader must “define the public views” in a way that transcends the surface noise of pettiness, contradiction and self-interest (O'Toole, 1996, pp. 9, 10).

**Interviewer:** Mr. Berry, are there desires ("true interests") that are deeper than the desires expressed by popular culture?

**Berry:** We have, in fact, no right to ask the world to conform to our desires. Sooner or later, if we hope to grow up, we have to confront the opposite imperative: that our rights and the realization of our desires are limited by human nature, by human community, and by the nature of the places in which we live. If we can accept our world's real limits and the responsibilities that protect our authentic rights, if we can unite affection and fidelity, if we can keep instinct and light together, then (as our tradition teaches) we may hope to transcend our limits, so that our life may grow in generosity, love, grace, and beauty without end (Berry, 1996, pp. 83, 84).

**Interviewer:** And yet the desires of pop culture are in contradiction to what you are saying!

**Berry:** As Thoreau so well knew, and so painstakingly tried to show us, what a man most needs is not a knowledge of how to get more, but a knowledge of the most he can do without, and of how to get along without it. The essential cultural discrimination is not between having and not having or have-haves and have-nots, but between the superfluous and the indispensable. Wisdom, it seems to me, is always poised upon the knowledge of minimums; it might be thought to be the art of minimums. Granting the
frailty, and no doubt the impermanence, of modern technology as a human contrivance, the man who can keep a fire in a stove or on a hearth is not only more durable, but wiser, closer to the meaning of fire, than the man who can only work a thermostat (Berry, 1989b, p. 76).

**Interviewer:** You are leaning toward something here that I think is essential to leadership. That is, somehow, teaching people to think outside the box of cultural assumptions. I believe you have said, for example, that even farmers are being duped by modern assumptions of "the way it"—*supposedly*—"is."

**Berry:** I listen fairly often, for example, to a radio "farm show."... The tone is set, unsurprisingly, by the commercials. No free solutions are recommended, either by the sponsors or by the experts. The successful farmers are successful by standards unembarrassing to sponsors and experts.

And not only must all recommended solutions be purchased, but only infallible solutions are recommended. It is never proposed that a recommended solution merely *might* work. It is never hinted that, under any circumstances, a recommended solution might be too expensive or unnecessary. Since all needed solutions are readily available—at a price though the price is never mentioned—the message is that farming is a business in which there are no real problems. The voices are *supremely* confident.

The journalistic-commercial vision of agriculture may be contemptible, but it is nonetheless powerful. It says that farmers and consumers alike dance to a tune called by the industrial economy; it says that this is both a good tune and the only tune.

The industrial version of agriculture is paid for—and this is my point—not by money only but by the intelligence of the buyers as well (Berry, 1984, pp. 24, 25).

In the August 1982 *American Spectator*, for example, Julian L. Simon wrote:

Wonderful though this Illinois land is for growing corn and soybeans, it has greater value to the economy as a shopping center, which is why the mall investors could pay the farmer enough to make it worthwhile for him to sell.... Under these conditions, no one would ever argue that the land should be required to remain in the production of corn and soybeans.

If one believes that this is the best of all possible economies, then one obviously need not argue about *anything*. Things are as they are because the best of all possible economies has determined that they should so be. The questions of what might be the definitions of a good farm or a good mine or a good shopping center are not asked, and need not be asked, because in the best of all possible economies such questions are already answered: the good is what we have and it is what we are going to have. Similarly, if one grants this kind of standing to "the economy," it is impossible to ask if there can be an error of any kind other than economic. If the price is right, we know all we need to know (p. 29).
Interviewer: It sounds like even our farmers need a paradigm shift. Is such work part of the work of the thoughtful leader?

Yet Another Leadership Scholar: [Yes. This is what I call] adaptive work [which] consists of efforts to close the gap between reality and a host of values. . . . We perceive problems whenever circumstances do not conform to the way we think things ought to be. This adaptive work involves not only the assessment of reality but also the clarification of values. . . . To make progress, not only must invention and action change circumstances to align reality with values, but the values themselves may also have to change. Leadership will consist not of answers or assured visions but of taking action to clarify values (Heifetz, 1994, pp. 31, 35)

Interviewer: In seeking to clarify values, business leaders must necessarily discuss the matter of corporate standards. Standards are measurements and they are used to evaluate if we are living up to our intended ideal. In their book *BLUR: The Speed of Change in the Connected Economy*, Davis and Meyer (1998) say “those who succeed in setting the standard in a field (example: Microsoft Windows) stand to profit tremendously” (p. 228). Our standards say something about our values. How should standards be set?

Another Professor: In the old logic of measurement, most standards are negotiated hierarchically within the organization. The budget process is a perfect example. . . .

The new logic emphasizes the importance of standards that come from outside the organization, often from comparisons with competitors’ performance. . . . Comparisons with competitors’ performance provide the most important basis for judging what is adequate and what is not. They also help to focus employee attention on what needs to be done in order to win in the marketplace (Lawler, 1996, pp. 239, 240).

Interviewer: Your goal, Professor, is to “win in the marketplace.” Standards are needed for that. You are suggesting they be set based on comparisons to the performance of competitors. Any other suggestions on the matter of standards?

The Professor: The beacons of productivity and innovation must be our guideposts. If we achieve profits at the cost of downgrading productivity or not innovating, they aren’t profits. We’re destroying capital. On the other hand, if we continue to improve productivity of all key resources and our innovative standing, we are going to be profitable. Not today, but tomorrow. . . .

For the first time we have an approach that makes economics a human discipline and relates it to human values, a theory that gives a businessman a yardstick to measure whether he’s still moving in the right direction and whether his results are real or delusions (Drucker, 1992, p. 30).
Berry: [Let me respond to this as an agrarian.] For many years, as a nation, we have asked our land only to produce, and we have asked our farmers only to produce. We have believed that this single economic standard not only guaranteed good performance but also preserved the ultimate truth and rightness of our aims. We have bought unconditionally the economists' line that competition and innovation would solve all problems, and that we would finally accomplish a technological end-run around biological reality and human condition (Berry, 1990b, pp. 205, 206).

Interviewer: What then, in farming, should our standard be, Mr. Berry?

Berry: [As agrarians] we are asking what is the best way to farm in each one of the world's numberless places, as defined by topography, soil type, climate, ecology, history, culture, and local need. And we know that the standard cannot be determined only by market demand or productivity or profitability or technological capability, or by any other single measure, however important it may be. The agrarian standard, inescapably, is local adaptation, which requires bringing local nature, local people, local economy, and local culture into a practical and enduring harmony (Berry, 2003a, p. 152).

Interviewer: Can you broaden that further than agriculture? Can you recommend alternatives to the materialistic standards that seem to dominate our culture? I'm thinking, as leaders not directly involved in farming and food, how does this apply as we work in the American economy?

Berry: Our present economy . . . does not account for affection at all, which is to say that it does not account for value. It is simply a description of the career of money as it preys upon both nature and human society. Apparently because our age is so manifestly unconcerned for the life of the spirit, many people conclude that it places an undue value on material things. But that cannot be so, for people who valued material things would take care of them and would care for the sources of them. We could argue that an age that properly valued and cared for material things would be an age properly spiritual. In my part of the country, the Shakers, "unworldly" as they were, were the true materialists, for they truly valued materials. And they valued them in the only way that such things can be valued in practice: by good workmanship, both elegant and sound. The so-called materialism of our time is, by contrast, at once indifferent to spiritual concerns and insatiably destructive of the material world. And I would call our economy, not materialistic, but abstract, intent upon the subversion of both spirit and matter by abstractions of value and power. In such an economy it is impossible to value anything one has. What one has (house or job, spouse or car) is only valuable insofar as it can be exchanged for what one believes that one wants—a limitless economic process based upon boundless dissatisfaction (Berry, 1987, pp. 144, 145).

Interviewer: As you talk of value, I am thinking of accounting. Is there a problem with the way accounting is traditionally understood?

Still Another Consultant: Our fixation with financial measures leads us to downplay or ignore less tangible nonfinancial measures, such as product quality,
customer satisfaction, order lead time, factor flexibility, the time it takes to launch a new product, and the accumulation of skills by labor over time. Yet these are increasingly the real drivers of corporate success of the middle to long term (Peters, 1987, p. 488).

**Interviewer:** It was bad accounting that got the leader of WorldCom in trouble this year. The Professor has said that there are substantive changes going on in the field of accounting (Drucker, 2002, p. 84). Mr. Berry, you have another view of accounting, again, out of your agrarian perspective. Would you share that with us?

**Berry:** American agriculture is fantastically productive. . . . That American agriculture is also fantastically expensive is less known, but it is equally undeniable, even though the costs have not yet entered into the official accounting. The costs are in loss of soil, in loss of farms and farmers, in soil and water pollution, in food pollution, in the decay of country towns and communities, and in the increasing vulnerability of the food supply system. The statistics of productivity alone cannot show these costs. We are nevertheless approaching a “bottom line” that is not on our books (Berry, 1987, p. 128).

We cannot deny that our leaders appear to take for granted that the eventual destruction of lives, livelihoods, homes, and communities is an acceptable, though not a chargeable, cost of production. The washed-out farm and bankrupt farmer, the strip-mined mountain and the unemployed or disease miner, the clear-cut forest and the depressed logging town—all are seen as the mere natural results of so-called free enterprise. The pattern of industrial “development” on the farm and in the forest, as in the coal fields, is that of combustion and exhaustion—not “growth,” a biological metaphor that is invariably contradicted by industrial practice (Berry, 1987, pp. 185, 186).

**Interviewer:** There is some accounting going on somewhere though. I mean, this would not have gone on for so long if there wasn’t profit for someone, right?

**Berry:** Almost always the profit is realized by people who are under no pressure or obligation to realize the losses—people, that is, who are so positioned by wealth and power that they need assign no value at all to what is lost. The cost of soil erosion is not deducted from the profit on a packaged beefsteak, just as the loss of forest, topsoil, and human homes on a Kentucky mountainside does not reduce the profit on a ton of coal (Berry, 1987, p. 133).

**Interviewer:** None of this—for better or for worse—would be possible without the progress of technology. Mr. Berry, you have described modern technology as “frail.” I would imagine there are some dissenters in the room.

**Another Futurist:** [Let’s talk about the progress of agriculture.] The average farmer [in the Agrarian Age] could . . . plant and harvest only about 10-12 acres per year.

The invention of the new technologies that ushered in the Industrial Age—about 1750, first in England, then Germany, and finally in the United States—transformed
agriculture and expanded per-acre yield, replacing process and animal powered implements with increasingly sophisticated self-powered machinery. Between 1840 and 1890, the required time to harvest one bushel of wheat tumbled from 3 hours to 10 minutes.

Despite the doubling of U.S. land under cultivation and a dramatic rise in population, improvements in agricultural technology combined with improved delivery through an expanded railway system, reduced the number of workers required to feed the nation. Agriculture achieved full mechanization by the twentieth century following the introduction of the gasoline engine and the invention of the tractor. Notwithstanding the famines that still haunt parts of the underdeveloped world (which could be cured economically, it not politically), in the Agrarian Age, humans conquered hunger (Oliver, 1999, p. 20).

A Skeptic: Technology helps us in countless ways, but it always backfires.

In Pakistan, for instance, applying the technology of irrigation and fertilization to land that does not drain adequately has had such adverse effects that more land is going out of cultivation than is being brought under cultivation.

With every application of technology a counterforce develops that is the exact opposite of what we intended. The danger, of course, is that we become so in love with technological applications that we forget their effect on outcome, so enamored of process that we lose sight of product (Farson, 1996, pp. 44, 45).

A Guru: Most of what is going on in technology, I believe, falls into this category: doing what people have always done, but faster. We westerners seem especially attracted to ‘more’ and ‘faster’ as the essence of innovation. We never think we do anything fast enough, so we always want to do things a little faster. This is insane at some level, since no one has ever figured out how to enhance the quality of life faster. Usually, things that enhance the quality of life involve slowing down, not speeding up. But, of course, we are focused more on quantity than quality of life, so speed is very alluring to us....

Blind technological progress contributes more complexity when we cannot understand the complexity that already exists. We are out of control, driving down a dark road with little or no light, and most technological progress amounts to speeding up (Peter Senge, cited in Gibson, 1998, p. 125).

Another Skeptic: [I call this] the Technopoly story [and it] is without a moral center. It puts in its place efficiency, interest, and economic advance. It promises heaven on earth through the conveniences of technological progress. It casts aside all traditional narratives and symbols that suggest stability and orderliness, and tells, instead, of a life of skills, technical expertise, and the ecstasy of consumption. Its purpose is to produce functionaries for an ongoing Technopoly (Postman, 1993, p. 179).
Interviewer: Mr. Berry, do you find this to be true? My sense is that there is a connection here to the inadequacy of accounting that we discussed earlier.

Berry: [The Other Futurist mentioned the gasoline engine and the tractor.] In the commercial workshops tractors had only to pass the test of mechanical correctness: They had to start and run more or less predictably. In the context of the world, however, these machines had effects and exerted influences that far surpassed their merely mechanical limits. They replaced agriculture’s old dependence on the free energy of the sun with a dependence on purchased energy; in general, they increased farming’s dependence on a supply economy that farmers cannot control or influence; over the years, these dependencies have radically oversimplified the patterns of farming, replacing diversity with monoculture, crop rotation with continuous tillage, and human labor with machines and chemicals; they have replaced (in Wes Jackson’s words) nature’s wisdom with human cleverness; they have caused widespread, profound social and cultural disruption. All these changes are still in progress. Whatever the technological or quantitative gains, this industrialization of farming has been costly, and it will continue to be. Most of the costs have been “externalized”—that is, charged to nature or the public or the future (Berry, 2000b, p. 144).

Interviewer: Honestly, Mr. Berry, have you ever been tempted by a new technological innovation?

Berry: When we moved to our little farm in the Kentucky River Valley in 1965 . . . we assumed . . . that there would be good motor-powered solutions for all of our practical problems. . . .

When I saw that Sears Roebuck sold a “power scythe,” it seemed the ideal solution [for some steep and rough to mow areas on my land], and I bought one. . . .

It did a fairly good job of mowing, cutting the grass and weeds off clean and close to the ground. . . . But this solution to the mowing problem involved a whole package of new problems:

1. The power scythe was heavy.
2. It was clumsy to use, and it got clumsier as the ground got steeper and rougher. . . .
3. It was dangerous. . . .
4. It enveloped you in noise, and in the smudge and stench of exhaust fumes. . . .
5. In rank growth, the blade tended to choke—in which case you had to kill the engine in a hurry. . . .
6. Like a lot of small gas engines not regularly used, this one was temperamental and undependable. . . .

When I review my own history, I am always amazed at how slow I have been to see the obvious. I don’t remember how long I used that “labor-saving” power scythe before I finally donated it to help enlighten one of my friends—but it was too long. . . .
The turning point, anyhow, was the day when Harlan Hubbard showed me an old-fashioned, human-powered scythe that was clearly the best that I had seen. It was light, comfortable to hold and handle. The blade was very sharp, angled and curved precisely to the path of its stroke. There was an intelligence and a refinement in its design that made it a pleasure to handle and look at and think about. . . .

In my opinion it is a better tool:

1. It is light.
2. It handles gracefully and comfortably even on steep ground.
3. It is far less dangerous than the power scythe.
4. It is quiet and makes no fumes.
5. It is much more adaptable to conditions than the power scythe. . . .
6. It always starts—provided the user will start. Aside from reasonable skill and care in use, there are no maintenance problems.
7. It requires no fuel or oil. It runs on what you ate for breakfast.
8. It is at least as fast as the power scythe. . . .
9. It is far cheaper than the power scythe, both to buy and to use.

I have noticed two further differences between the power scythe and the Marugg scythe that are not so practical as those listed above. . . . The first is that I never took the least pleasure in using the power scythe, whereas in using the Marugg scythe, whatever the weather and however difficult the cutting, I always work with the pleasure that one inevitably gets from using a good tool. And because it is not motor-driven and it’s quiet and odorless, the Marugg scythe also allows the pleasure of awareness of what is going on around you as you work.

The other difference is between kinds of weariness. Using the Marugg scythe causes the simple bodily weariness that comes with exertion. This is a kind of weariness that, when not extreme, can in itself be one of the pleasures of work. The power scythe on the other hand, adds to the weariness of exertion the unpleasant and destructive weariness of strain. . . .

The power scythe—and it is far from being an isolated or unusual example—is not a labor saver or a shortcut. It is a labor maker (Berry, 1981, pp. 171-175).

**Interviewer:** But what about the future? There are folks around the table who are pretty convinced that to not anticipate what is coming is suicide for any organizational leader.

**A Futurist:** [That’s right.] Today, a simple choice faces every individual, every corporation, every government and ever society on earth. That choice is: rethink the future or be forced to rethink the future.
Those who chose the first option will have the best chance of surviving and thriving in the turbulent terrain ahead. They will spot the emerging opportunities and impending crises while there is still time to take appropriate actions. On the other hand, those who procrastinate, in the belief that the future will be a continuation of the past, will quickly find themselves overtaken by change. They will be forced to rethink where they are going, and how they are getting there, when it is probably too late to avoid the inevitable. . . . Rethinking the future is a never ending process. Tomorrow will always be a moving target. Which means that when we are finished rethinking the future, we have to start all over again (Gibson, 1998, pp. 13, 14).

**Interviewer:** Sounds tiring. Do any here feel it is the responsibility of leaders to pay attention to what is coming next?

**Yet Another Professor:** [Yes, in this regard I would remind us that] there are three sources of surprise: something you expect to happen doesn’t, something you don’t expect to happen does, and something you never even thought about happens, with unfortunate consequences for your vision. Obviously, by definition, there will always be surprises, but the domain of surprise can be reduced and the negative effects of surprises can be ameliorated.

To reduce surprises or to lessen their impact . . . be quite thorough in forecasting and anticipating the full range of future events, drawing on the best expert available, refusing to be lulled into conventional wisdom and thinking of the future always in terms of alternative scenarios (Nanus, 1992, p. 169).

**Interviewer:** Okay, Mr. Berry, let’s have some fun: You have absolute power. Now tell us what you’d do to ensure our planet’s survival for the next 100 years.

**Berry:** This game of ‘How to survive for the next 100 years’ is useless. Nobody knows what is going to happen in the next 100 years. The next 100 years will be mostly surprising, as were the last 100 years.

It is the present that ought to concern us, and for the present we have had good instructions, from several traditions, for a long time. We must quit being selfish, greedy, and violent. We must respect the works of God, and do good work ourselves. We must help our neighbors (including our enemies). We must care for the old, the poor, the infirm, and the homeless. We must keep our promises. We must preserve our communities, and teach the young. Whatever we use, we must preserve. If we do these things in the present, we need not worry about the future. If we don’t do them in the present, the future will not be much improved by making plans (Schumaker, 1992, ¶ 13-15)

**A Mentor:** [I advise leaders to] avoid future shock. When an administrator becomes too involved in planning, in the next step, in the future, he or she frequently forgets the past and neglects the present. As a result, before the plan goes into effect, employees are probably already opposed to it. They, after all, have to function in the
here and now, and if their boss’s eye is always on tomorrow, he or she is not giving them the attention and support they need. Furthermore, when an organization focuses too much on a vision of future greatness, everyone is bound to be disillusioned with the reality. Greatness doesn’t just happen. It proceeds out of a well-made organization. And one problem with planning for the future is that there are no objective criteria against which to measure alternative solutions. There isn’t even a current reality against which to test them. As a result, a planner is bound to generate future shock along with valid ideas, and since there’s no surefire way to separate the two, he or she should proceed very carefully (Bennis, 1991, p. 150).

**Interviewer:** That sounds like good advice. Mr. Berry, you are resistant to those who make abstract guesses on what might be coming. But you are positive about those who imagine, plan, and take action for a healthy future. Careful thought about the consequences of our actions is important to you.

**Berry:** In America... one of the most depraved and destructive habits has always been an obsession with results. Getting the job done is good. Pondering as to how the job should be done, or whether or not it should be done, is apt to be regarded as a waste of time (Berry, 1989b, p. 106).

[Let me give you an example.] Our house stands on a slope overlooking the Kentucky River a few miles from its entrance into the Ohio at Carrollton. It has been a long time since this was a “natural river.”... Yet, for those who know where and how to look, the valley still has a rich natural life...

I have known this valley all my life... The one part of its history that I have known from the beginning is the pleasure-boat era. Since the end of World War II motorboats have increased from rarity to such prevalence that on summer holidays and weekends the traffic is comparable to that on a highway....

In relation to the natural world, the pleasure of Americans can be destructive in the same way that their work has already proved to be. It is not, certainly, a conscious destructiveness. But in that very unconsciousness it becomes an aspect of one of our worst national failings: our refusal to admit the need to be conscious. Or to put it more meaningfully: our refusal to admit that unconsciousness, in our time, is almost inevitably destructive....

Speeding along, [the boatman] has before him a tranquil river scene, peaceful and enticing as if pictured in a tourist brochure. When the shores begin to churn and the water to cloud with mud from the violence of his passing, he is not there (Berry, 2004a, pp. 32-36).

[Often] plans have been undone by natural processes that were not foreseen or not taken into account.... It is the business of natural processes to produce consequences, and the first law of economy is that justice is always done—though not necessarily to

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those who deserve it. Ecological justice, in fact, falls most often on later generations, or on the people who live downwind or downstream (Berry, 1991, p. 48).

**Interviewer:** So, long-term thinking is important in your understanding. That is not what you are opposed to.

**Berry:** The work of preserving the life of the world, of which our lives are a part and on which they depend, is difficult and complex and endless. In nature all that grows is finally made to augment the possibility of growth, and so nothing is wasted. This year’s leaves decay and enter the intricate life of the soil, which assures that there will be more leaves another year. It is this pattern and only this—not any that we may conceivably invent—that we must imitate and enter into if we are to live in the world without destroying it.

The task of preserving the life of the world has little to do with the present values of American society. It has almost nothing to do with our concepts of wealth and profit and success and luxury and ease. It has nothing at all to do with short-term investments, or short-term anything else. It is not recognizable to short-term intelligence. It involves us in work that we can neither live to finish nor imagine the end of. It is humble work, often involving the use of the hands. It requires respect for mystery. Its model figures are not to be found among the great figures of our history: our artists, inventors, soldiers, statesman—but among humble people whose lives were devoted laboriously and ceremoniously and lovingly to the life of their land: tribal people and peasants (Berry, 1991, p. 20).

**Interviewer:** So, how does this work in your reality? How does vision play into work on a farm?

**Berry:** When one buys [a] farm and moves there to live, something . . . begins. Thoughts begin to be translated into acts. Truth begins to intrude with its matter-of-fact. One’s work may be defined in part by one’s visions, but it is defined in part too by problems, which the work leads to and reveals. And daily life, work, and problems gradually alter the visions. It invariably turns out, I think, that one’s first visions of one’s place was to some extent an imposition on it. But if one’s sight is clear and if one stays on and works well, one’s love gradually responds to the place as it really is, and one’s visions gradually image possibilities that are really in it. Vision, possibility, work and life—all have changed by mutual correction. Correct discipline, given enough time, gradually removes one’s self from one’s line of sight. One works to better purpose then and makes fewer mistakes, because at last one sees where one is. Two human possibilities of the highest order thus come within reach: what one wants can become the same as what one has, and one’s knowledge can cause respect for what one knows (Berry, 1983, p. 70).

**Interviewer:** The task of a leader, as I understand it from many around this table, is inspiration. Leaders communicate so as to capture the imaginations and garner the best work from their followers. Is that how some of you would express it?
Two Teachers: There are a lot of intoxicating visions and a lot of noble intentions. Many people have rich and deeply textured agendas, but without communication nothing will be realized. Success requires the capacity to relate a compelling image of a desired state of affairs—the kind of image that induces enthusiasm and commitments in others.

Communication creates meaning for people. Or should. It’s the only way any group, small or large, can become aligned behind the overarching goals of an organization (Bennis & Nanus, 1985, pp. 33, 34).

Berry: [We need a] language that is not sloganish and rhetorical, but rather is capable of reference, specification, precision, and refinement—a language never far from experience and example (Berry, 2000b, p. 137).

Interviewer: Can you give a specific example of what you mean?

Berry: [I once attended] a hearing on three new strip-mine regulations proposed by the Strip Mining and Reclamation Divisions of the Kentucky Department of Natural Resources. . . . The testimony of [the mining] company witnesses turned on the same two arguments: (1) any regulation that would reduce profit would be wrong; (2) control is impossible, in any case, because of the diversity of mining conditions.

At the close of the hearing one of the company lawyers rose to offer the “assurance” that, though the operators are working for profit, they do not wish to do so at the expense of the public welfare, or the welfare of their neighbors. They’re concerned about the economic factor, he said, because they operate on a narrow margin of profit. There are a lot of irresponsible people in the coal business, he admitted, but he predicted reassuringly that those irresponsibles will bring about their own failure. He did not explain this process; presumably they will be dealt with by the same just and unerring Fate that so effectively deletes irresponsibility from the legal profession (Berry, 2004a, pp. 12, 14-16).

A Guru: History, mythology, and business lore abound with examples, from Oedipus to present times, of leaders who fail because they lack commitment to the truth.

As my colleague . . . puts it, “I have met many leaders who have been destroyed by their vision.” This happens, almost always, because the leaders lose their capacity to see current reality. They collude in their and their organization’s desire to assuage uneasiness and avoid uncertainty by pretending everything is going fine. They become speech makers rather than leaders. They become “true believers” rather than learners (Senge, 1990, pp. 356, 357).

Interviewer: But shouldn’t leaders continue to inspire and teach their followers the single-minded vision of the organizations?
Professor: [That's right.] To be able to perform, an organization and its people must believe . . . that its own specialized task is the most important task in society. . . .

The organization must be self-centered. Collectively, they discharge the tasks of society. But each discharges only one task, sees only one task.

In fact, we expect the leaders of these organizations to believe . . . that their organization is the organization, that it is society (Drucker, 1994, p. 100).

A Guru: [On the other had, when I talk about] "leader as teacher" [it] is not about "teaching" people how to achieve their vision. It is about fostering learning, for everyone. Such leaders help people throughout the organization develop systemic understandings. Accepting this responsibility is the antidote to one of the most common downfalls of otherwise gifted leaders—losing their commitment to the truth (Senge, 1990, p. 356).

Berry: [As I see it,] anyone totally committed to a single pursuit almost inevitably becomes the propagandist of his own effort. As a nation of specialists, we have become a nation obsessed with self-justification. When we don't have it, we make it. And we are now familiar enough with the make-work of manufacturers who need products, scholars who need projects, politicians who need issues, generals who need armies. We speak the language of a people bent on justifying everything we do or want to do, whether it is justifiable or not (Berry, 2004a, p. 51).

Interviewer: Mr. Berry, you have described the problem you perceive with specialist language. How would you hope that our leaders communicate?

Berry: [Consider] "Nate Shaw" . . . the pseudonym of a black farmer born in Alabama in 1885. . . . In March of 1971 he began telling his story to a young white man, Theodore Rosengarten. The telling, recorded on tapes, took 120 hours; the result, much edited, is [a] remarkable book. . . .

Shaw’s vocabulary and usage will sometimes seem strange to readers not familiar with his region and way of life, but it will never seem empty or inert. . . . He speaks always in reference to a real world, thoroughly experienced and understood. His words keep an almost physical hold on “what I have touched with my hands and what has touched me.” It is a language under the discipline of experience, not of ideas or rules. Shaw’s words, always interposed between experience and intelligence, have the exactitude of conviction, whereas the words of an analyst or theorists can have only the exactitude of definition (Berry, 1990b, pp. 17, 19-20).

[Another example comes from my own life.] I have been for the greater part of my life an artist of sorts, a cottage industrialist of literature, and for the past nineteen years I have been involved in a conversation with Wes Jackson, who is a scientist, a plant geneticist, and co-founder of the Land Institute in Salina, Kansas. . . . What has made our conversation possible? [A number of things, but for now just one:] Though each of us
possesses the specialized vocabulary of his discipline, our conversation uses such talk only when necessary. We both can speak common English. Each of us, moreover, can speak a local English that is a source both of pleasure and exactitude. Our conversation is always striving to be local and particular. It is full of proper nouns, names of place and people (Berry, 2000b, pp. 124, 127).

We will understand the world, and preserve ourselves and our values in it, only insofar as we have a language that is alert and responsive to it, and careful of it. I mean that literally. When we give our plows such brand names as “Sod Blaster,” we are imposing on their use conceptual limits which raise the likelihood that they will be used destructively. When we speak of man’s “war against nature,” or of a “peace offensive,” we are accepting the limitation of a metaphor that suggests, and even proposes, violent solutions (Berry, 1972, p. 171).

Scene 4: Living and Working

“Successfully”

At the start of this scene, the readers are seated from one end of the table to the other as per the following visual example (I = Interviewer; WB = Wendell Berry; X = the other readers):

\[ X \times X \times I \times WB \times X \times X \]

Interviewer: I’d like to talk about a definition of success. The Professor has made a point of teaching us that results matter. But Mr. Berry said, “One of [America’s] most depraved and destructive habits has always been an obsession with results.” How do so-called industrialists and agrarians differ on this?

The Professor: [I] define performance and results as “maximizing the wealth-producing capacity of the enterprise.” . . . It is this objective that integrates short-term and long-term results and . . . ties the operational dimensions of business performance—market standing, innovation, productivity, and people and their development—to financial needs and financial results. It is also this objective on which all constituencies depend for the satisfaction of their expectations and objectives, whether shareholders, customers, or employees (Drucker, 1992, p. 245).

Berry: The success of the typical executive . . . is not very successful, and his or her security is not very secure. For one thing, this success and security can be achieved only by investing one’s life in an economy that is destroying its natural sources and therefore itself as surely as water runs downhill. For another, this personal success and security, which are usually involved in the success and security of a corporation, in no way involve the success and security of society. The terms of this success and security are individualistic and competitive. The executive, that is, takes what he or she can get, by the use of whatever power is available. . . . The process of gaining this success and
security thus isolates the individual both from nature and from other humans—which, of course, is a description of failure and insecurity (Berry, 1989b, p. 123).

**Interviewer:** Mr. Berry, is there any sort of “flip side” to that?

**Berry:** [Of course.] There are two ways by which individual success and security can be made (within mortal limits) successful and secure: they must rest on a sound understanding and practice of economic justice; and they must involve and be involved in the success and security of the community. Competitive principle excludes both of these ways (Berry, 1989b, p. 124).

**Interviewer:** Mr. Berry, you have also defined “success as health.” But how do we contribute toward the health of a place or of a community?

**Berry:** I am proposing that in order to preserve the health of nature, we must preserve ourselves as human beings—as creatures who possess humanity not just as a collection of physical attributes but also as the cultural imperative to be caretakers, good neighbors to one another and to the other creatures (Berry, 1995, p. 74).

The national economy has prescribed ways of use but not ways of care (Berry, 1990b, p. 110).

The question of what a beloved country is to be used for quickly becomes inseparable from the questions of who is to use it or who is to prescribe its uses, and what will be the ways of using it. If we speak simply of the use of “a country,” then only the first question is asked, and it is asked only by its would-be users. It is not until we speak of “a beloved country”—a particular country, particularly loved—that the question about the ways of use will arise. It arises because, loving our country, we see where we are, and we see that present ways of use are not adequate. They are not adequate because such local cultures and economies as we once had have been stunted or destroyed. As a nation, we have attempted to substitute the concepts of “land use,” “agribusiness,” “development,” and the like for the culture of stewardship and husbandry (Berry, 1990b, p. 115).

Our presence in this varied and fertile world is our perpetual crisis. It forces upon us constantly a virtual curriculum of urgent questions: Can we adapt our work and our pleasure to our places so as to live in them without destroying them? That is, can we make adequately practical and pleasing local cultures? Are we Americans capable of an authentic (which is to say a land-based) multiculturalism? Can we limit our work and our economies to a scale appropriate to our places, to our place in the order of things, and to our intelligence? Can we control ourselves? Can we get beyond the assumption that it is possible to live inhumanely and yet “save the planet” by a series of last-minute preservations of things perceived at the last minutes to be endangered and, only because endangered, precious? (Berry, 1995, p. 74).
Interviewer: Mr. Berry, in that list of questions you allude to some practices that may be required of us. They probably should be called "disciplines," which is not a word I see much in the literature on business leadership.

Another Mentor: Habits [as I like to call them] are powerful factors in our lives. Because they are consistent, often unconscious patterns, they constantly, daily, express our character and produce our effectiveness . . . or ineffectiveness.

[I] define a habit as the intersection of knowledge, skill, and desire. Knowledge is the theoretical paradigm, the what to do and the why. Skill is the how to do. And desire is the motivation, the want to do. In order to make something a habit in our lives, we have to have all three (Covey, 1989, pp. 46, 47).

Berry: [I can give you an example of that from growing up on a farm.] One of the first disciplines imposed on me was that of a teamster. Perhaps I first stood in the role of student before my father's father, who, halting a team in front of me, would demand to know which mule had the best head, which the best shoulder or rump, which was the lead mule, were they hitched right. And there came a time when I knew, and took a considerable pride in knowing. . . .

I seem to have been bom with an aptitude for a way of life that was doomed (Berry, 2004a, p. 172).

Interviewer: There's a good example, it seems to me, of a farming discipline learned young, and still practiced by Mr. Berry on his own farm, now. A question for our Mentor: What are you hoping your "habits" will accomplish in a person's life?

Another Mentor: [The] habits are not a set of separate or piecemeal psych-up formulas. In harmony with the natural laws of growth, they provide an incremental, sequential, highly integrated approach to the development of personal and interpersonal effectiveness. They move us progressively on a Maturity Continuum from dependence to independence to interdependence. . . .

On the maturity continuum, dependence is the paradigm of you—you take care of me; you come through for me; you didn’t come through; I blame you for the results.

Independence is the paradigm of I—I can do it; I am responsible; I am self-reliant; I can choose.

Interdependence is the paradigm of we—we can do it; we can cooperate; we can combine our talents and abilities and create something greater together.

Dependent people need others to get what they want. Independent people can get what they want through their own effort. Interdependent people combine their own efforts with the efforts of others to achieve their greatest success (Covey, 1989, p. 48, 49)
Interviewer: Mr. Berry, your work has been devoted to the matter of healthy communities and healthy land. On the Maturity Continuum we've been given, where do we stand as a nation?

Berry: How dependent, in fact, are we? How dependent are our neighborhoods and communities? How might our dependences be reduced? To answer these questions will require better thoughts and better deeds than we have been capable of so far (Berry, 1990b, p. 201).

[Let me address this, first, from the perspectives of a family farm and its fragile state in our country.] The question of the survival of the family farm and the farm family is one version of the question of who will own the country, which is, ultimately, the question of who will own the people. Shall the usable property of our country be democratically divided, or not? Shall the power of property be a democratic power, or not? If many people do not own the usable property, then they must submit to the few who do own it. They cannot eat or be sheltered or clothed except in submission. They will find themselves entirely dependent on money, they will find costs always higher, and money always hard to get. To renounce the principles of democratic property, which is the only basis of democratic liberty, in exchange for specious notions of efficiency or the economics of the so-called free market is a tragic folly (Berry, 1987, p. 165).

It is a fact that for any given farm there is a ratio between people and acres that is correct; there are also correct ratios between dependence and independence and between consumption and production. For a farm family, a certain degree of independence is possible and is desirable, but no farmer and no family can be entirely independent. A certain degree of dependence is inescapable; whether or not it is desirable is a question of who is helped by it. If a family removes its dependence from its neighbors—if, indeed, farmers remove their dependence from their families—and give it to the agribusiness corporations (and to moneylenders), the chances are, as we have seen, that the farmers and their families will not be greatly helped. This suggests that dependence on family and neighbors may constitute a very desirable kind of independence (Berry, 1987, pp. 176, 177).

Interviewer: OK, that makes sense from the perspective of a farm family and in a farming community. How about from the perspective of someone in a city? How does this dependence, independence, interdependence issue relate to the rest of America?

Berry: Many times, after I have finished a lecture on the decline in American farming and rural life, someone in the audience has asked, “What can city people do?”

“Eat responsibly,” I have usually answered. . . .

I begin with the proposition that eating is an agricultural act. Eating ends the annual drama of the food economy that begins with planting and birth. Most eaters, however, are no longer aware that this is true. . . . For [most urban shoppers] . . . food is
pretty much an abstract idea—something they do not know or imagine—until it appears on the grocery shelf or on the table.

The specialization of production induces specialization of consumption. Patrons of the entertainment industry, for example, entertain themselves less and less and have become more and more passively dependent on commercial suppliers. This is certainly true also of patrons of the food industry, who have tended more and more to be mere consumers—passive, uncritical and dependent. Indeed, this sort of consumption may be said to be one of the chief goals of industrial production. The food industrialists have by now persuaded millions of consumers to prefer food that is already prepared. They will grow, deliver, and cook your food for you and (just like your mother) beg you to eat it. That they do not yet offer to insert it, pre-chewed, into your mouth is only because they have found no profitable way to do so. We may rest assured that they would be glad to find such a way. The ideal industrial food consumer would be strapped to a table with a tube running from the food factory directly into his or her stomach.

Perhaps I exaggerate, but not by much.

There is, then, a politics of food that, like any politics, involves our freedom. We still (sometimes) remember that we cannot be free if our minds and voices are controlled by someone else. But we have neglected to understand that we cannot be free if our food and its sources are controlled by someone else. The condition of the passive consumer of food is not a democratic condition. One reason to eat responsibly is to live free (Berry, 1990b, pp. 145-147).

Interviewer: Which is to say, to be independent. Your implications are profound as they relate to the relationship of the food industry and the consumer.

Berry: The consumer . . . must be kept from discovering that, in the food industry—as in any other industry—the overriding concerns are not quality and health, but volume and price. For decades now the entire industrial food economy, from the large farms and feedlots to the chains of supermarkets and fast-food restaurants, has been obsessed with volume. It has relentlessly increased scale in order to increase volume in order (presumably) to reduce costs. But as scale increases, diversity declines; as diversity declines, so does health; as health declines, the dependence on drugs and chemicals necessarily increases. As capital replaces labor, it does so by substituting machines, drugs, and chemicals for human workers and for the natural health and fertility of the soil. The food is produced by any means or any shortcut that will increase profits. And the business of the cosmeticians of advertising is to persuade the consumer that food so produced is good, tasty, healthful, and a guarantee of marital fidelity and long life (Berry, 1990b, pp. 148, 149).

Interviewer: Get practical. How can we be independent of the food economy?

Berry: Here is a list, probably not definitive:
1. Participate in food production to the extent that you can. If you have a yard or even just a porch box or a pot in a sunny window, grow something to eat in it. . . . You will be fully responsible for any food that you grow for yourself, and you will know all about it.

2. Prepare your own food. This means reviving in your own mind and life the arts of kitchen and household. This should enable you to eat more cheaply, and it will give you a measure of “quality control.” . . .

3. Learn the origins of the food you buy, and buy the food that is produced closest to your home. . . .

4. Whenever possible, deal directly with a local farmer, gardener, or orchardist. . . .

5. Learn, in self-defense, as much as you can of the economy and technology of industrial food production. . . .


7. Learn as much as you can, by direct observation and experience if possible, of the life histories of the food species (Berry, 1990b, pp. 149, 150).

Interviewer: I see what you are saying about independence. But I still sense a level of dependence. Is that true? Or am I missing something?

Berry: The idea of citizenship . . . begins at home. Its meanings come clearest, it is felt most intensely in one’s own house. The health, coherence, and meaningfulness of one’s own household are the measure of the success of the government, and not the other way around. My devotion thins as it widens. I care more for my household than for the town of Port Royal, more for the town of Port Royal, than for the County of Henry, more for the County of Henry than for the state of Kentucky, more for the state of Kentucky, than for the United States of America. But I do not care more for the United States of America than for the world.

I must attempt to care as much for the world as for my household. Those are the poles between which a competent morality would balance and mediate: the doorstep and the planet. The most meaningful dependence of my house is not on the U.S. government but on the world, the earth. No matter how sophisticated and complex and powerful our institutions, we are still exactly as dependent on the earth as the earthworms. To cease to know this, and to fail to act upon the knowledge, is to begin to die the death of a broken machine. In default of man’s personal cherishing and care, now that his machinery has become so awesomely powerful, the earth must become the victim of his institutions, the violent self-destructive machinery of man-in-the-abstract and so, conversely, the most meaningful dependence on the earth is not on the U.S. government, but on my household—how I live, how I raise my children, how I care for the land entrusted to me (Berry, 2004a, pp. 76, 77).

Interviewer: So it starts with responsible households. But can you explain just how a local community would create the interdependence that you write about?

Berry: What we must do is simple: We must shorten the distance that our food is transported so that we are eating more and more from local supplies, more and more to
the benefit of local farmers and more and more to the satisfaction of local consumers. This can be done by cooperation among small organizations: conservation groups, churches, neighborhood associations, consumer co-ops, local merchants, local independent banks, and organizations of small farmers. It also can be done by cooperation between individual producers and consumers. We should not be discouraged to find that local food economies can grow only gradually; it is better that they should grow gradually. But as they grow they will bring about significant return of power, wealth, and health to the people (Berry, 1995, pp. 6, 7).

**Interviewer:** Your idea of interdependence—obviously—is not merely within the boundaries of an organization, but among local neighborhoods, communities, and even between rural regions and cities. But this is a new way of thinking, I think—

**Berry:** [Breaking in.] In our age of the world there is a kind of mind that is trying to be totally rational, which is in effect to say totally economic. This mind is now dominant. It is always telling us that the good things we have are really not as good as they seem, that they can seem good only to "backward people," and they certainly are not as good as the things we will have in the future, if only we will give up the things that seem good to us now. . . . We have come to the point at which reason fails. . . .

The failure of reason comes to light in the recognition that things which cannot be quantified—the health of watersheds, the integrity of ecosystems, the wholeness of human hearts—ultimately affect the durability, availability, and affordability of necessary quantities. . . .

Do we know of a different or better or saner kind of mind?

I think we do. It is what I would call the affectionate or sympathetic mind. This mind is not irrational, but neither is it primarily rational. . . .

Such a mind, I think, is no longer satisfied with the conventional standards of industrialism: profitability and utility. Needing a more authentic, more comprehensive criterion, it looks beyond those concerns, without necessarily giving them up. It tries to see the work and the product in context; it tries to derive its standards from that context. And once again, it must proceed by way of questions: Is the worker diminished or in any other way abused by this work? What is the effect of the work upon the place, its ecosystem, its watershed, its atmosphere, its community? What is the effect of the product upon its user, and upon the place where it is used? (Berry, 2003a, pp. 36-38).

**Interviewer:** You are talking about a discipline of the mind. Professor, you affirm an age of specialist knowledge. You recognize a world, a post-capitalist society you call it, in which knowledge is the resource.

**The Professor:** [If we go back in history, we observe that] the purpose of knowledge for Socrates . . . was self-knowledge and self-development; results were internal. For his antagonist, Protagoras, the result was the ability to know what to say

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and to say it well. It was "image," to use a contemporary term. For more than two thousand years, Protagoras's concept of knowledge dominated Western learning and defined knowledge. The medieval *trivium*, the educational system that up to this day underlies what we call a "liberal education," consisted of grammar, logic, and rhetoric—the tools needed to decide what to say and how to say it. They are not tools for deciding what to do and how to do it. . . .

The knowledge we now consider knowledge proves itself in action. What we now mean by knowledge is information effective in action, information focused on results. These results are seen outside the person—in society and economy, or in the advancement of knowledge itself (Drucker, 1994, pp. 45, 46).

**Interviewer:** Mr. Berry, we are told this is the "information age" or, as the Professor has just described, a knowledge society. Are you talking about something different here, or are you pretty close to each other in your understanding?

**Berry:** [In pervasive use today is the machine metaphor.] The mind [we are told] is a machine for thinking. The "progress" here is a reduction of mind to brain and then of brain to computer. This reduction implies and requires the reduction of knowledge to "information." It requires, in fact, the reduction of everything to numbers and mathematical operations. . . .

Consider the difference between what we mean by knowledge and what the computer now requires us to mean by "information." Knowledge refers to the ability to do or say the right thing at the right time; we would not speak of somebody who does the wrong thing at the wrong time as "knowledgeable." People who perform well as musicians, athletes, teachers, or farmers are people of knowledge. And such examples tell us much about the nature of knowledge. Knowledge is formal and it informs speech and action. It is instantaneous; it is present and available when and where it is needed.

"Information," which once meant that which forms or fashions from within, now means merely "data." However organized this data may be, it is not shapely or formal or in the true sense in-forming. It is not present where it is needed; if you have to "access" it, you don't have it. Whereas knowledge moves and forms acts, information is inert. . . .

The difference, then, between information and knowledge is something like the difference between a dictionary and somebody's language (Berry, 1995, pp. 94-96).

**Interviewer:** Can you apply this to the practical efficiency of a mentally disciplined farmer?

**Berry:** Among [farmers] remarkable for [their] thoroughness of . . . intelligence, is Earl F. Spencer, who has a 250-acre dairy farm near Palatine Bridge, New York. . . .

[He made] a very unconventional choice, which in itself required a lot of independent intelligence. But character and intelligence of an even more respectable
order were involved in the next step, which was to understand that the initial decision implied a profound change in the pattern of the farm and of his life and assumptions as a farmer.

[He had some serious issues to face and] he began to ask fundamental questions about the nature of the creatures and the land he was dealing with, and to ask if he could not bring about some sort of balance between their needs and his own. His conclusion was that "to be in balance with nature is to be successful." His farm, he says, had been going in a "dead run"; now he would slow it to a walk.

[It has taken some time, but eventually he has been able to say,] "We have half the animals we had before and are feeding half as much grain to those remaining, so we now need to plant corn only two years in a row. Less corn means less plowing, less fuel for growing and harvesting, and less wear on the most expensive equipment." Veterinary bills have been reduced also. And . . . if the schedule holds, he will [soon] buy no commercial fertilizer at all (Berry, 1981, pp. 138-140).

Interviewer: The farmer is more than just a specialist. He must be able to think and apply his thinking to more than just one task. But still, he can't know everything. Isn't there a place for recognizing the inevitable limitation to what can be known?

Berry: As in our conscious moments we all know, [the trouble] is that we are terrifyingly ignorant. The most learned of us are ignorant. The acquisition of knowledge always involves the revelation of ignorance—almost is the revelation of ignorance. Our knowledge of the world instructs us first of all that the world is greater than our knowledge of it. To those who rejoice in the abundance and intricacy of Creation, this is a source of joy, as it is to those who rejoice in freedom. . . . To those would-be solvers of "the human problem," who hope for knowledge equal to (capable of controlling) the world, it is a source of unremitting defeat and bewilderment. The evidence is overwhelming that knowledge does not solve "the human problem." Indeed, the evidence overwhelmingly suggests—with Genesis—that knowledge is the problem. Or perhaps we should say instead that all our problems tend to gather under two questions about knowledge: Having the ability and desire to know, how and what should we learn? And, having learned, how and for what should we use what we know? (Berry, 1983, p. 65).

Interviewer: So, ignorance is desirable?

Berry: This is not a recommendation of ignorance. To know nothing, after all, is no more possible than to know enough. I am only proposing that knowledge, like everything else, has its place, and that we need urgently now to put it in its place. If we want to know and cannot help knowing, then let us learn as fully and accurately as we decently can. But let us at the same time abandon our superstitious beliefs about knowledge: that it is ever sufficient; that it can of itself solve problems; that it is intrinsically good; that it can be used objectively or disinterestedly (Berry, 1983, p. 66).
Some truth meets the eye; some does not. We are up against mystery. . . .

To call the unknown by its right name, "mystery," is to suggest that we had better respect the possibility of a larger, unseen pattern that can be damaged or destroyed and, with it, the smaller patterns. . . .

What impresses me about [mystery] is the insistent practicality of it. If we are up against mystery, then we dare act only on the most modest assumptions. The modern scientific program has held that we must act on the basis of knowledge, which, because its effects are so manifestly large, we have assumed to be ample. But if we are up against mystery, then knowledge is relatively small, and the ancient program is the right one: Act on the basis of ignorance. Acting on the basis of ignorance, paradoxically requires one to know things, remember things—for instance, that failure is possible, that effort is possible, that second chances are desirable (so don’t risk everything on the first chance), and so on (Berry, 1987, pp. 4, 5).

**Interviewer:** How would you advise one to live in the light of mystery? How would you advise a leader to lead in the face of limited knowledge?

**Berry:** The real question that is always to be addressed is the one that arises from our state of ignorance: How does one act well—sensitively, compassionately, without irreparable damage on the basis of partial knowledge?

Perhaps the most proper, and the most natural response to our state of ignorance is not haste to increase the amount of available information, or even to increase knowledge, but rather a lively and convivial engagement with the issue of form, elegance, and kindness (Berry, 2000b, p. 149).

**Interviewer:** And restraint?

**Berry:** [Yes.] Our ability to [solve problems] depends on virtues that are specifically human: accurate memory, observation, insight, imagination, inventiveness, reverence, devotion, fidelity, restraint. Restraint—for us, now—above all: the ability to accept and live within limits; to resist changes that are merely novel or fashionable; to resist greed and pride; to resist the temptation to “solve” problems by ignoring them, accepting them as “trade-offs,” or bequeathing them to prosperity. A good solution, then, must be in harmony with good character, cultural value, and moral law (Berry, 1981, p. 145).

[In his book *The One Straw Revolution: An Introduction to Natural Farming*, Mr. Masanobu Fukuoka advocates “do-nothing farming.” In the Foreward to his book, I wrote:]

The argument here is not against work; it is against unnecessary work. People sometimes work more than they need to for the things that they desire, and some things that they desire they do not need.
And "do nothing" also refers to the stance that common sense is apt to take in response to expert authority: "How about not doing this? How about not doing that?—that was my way of thinking." This is the instructive contrariness of children and certain old people, who rightly distrust the "sophistication" that goes ahead without asking, "What for?" (Berry, 1978, p. xi).

Interviewer: Okay, there's another discipline, the discipline of restraint in the face of our evident ignorance and the limits that exist in this world. Which is very un-American because we are told that this is a land of "unlimited potential" and that "there are no limits" to what we can do. If restraint is a "negative" discipline, is there a positive one on the flip side?

Berry: The closer we live to the ground that we live from, the more we will know about our economic life; the more we know about our economic life, the more able we will be to take responsibility for it. The way to bring discipline into one's personal or household or community economy is to limit one's economic geography (Berry, 1993, p. 39).

Interviewer: What does this look like in practice?

Berry: Propriety in our thoughts and acts. "Propriety" is an old term, even an old-fashioned one, and is not much in favor. Its value is in its reference to the fact that we are not alone. The idea of propriety makes an issue of the fittingness of our conduct to our place or circumstances, even to our hopes. It acknowledges the always-pressing reality of context and of influence; we cannot speak or act or live out of context. Our life inescapably affects other lives; which inescapably affect our life. We are being measured, in other words, by a standard that we did not make and cannot destroy. . . .

Propriety is the antithesis of individualism. To raise the issue of propriety is to deny that any individual's wish is the ultimate measure of the world. The issue presents itself as a set of questions: Where are we? (This question applies, with as much particularity as human competence will allow, to all of the world's millions of small localities.) Who are we? (The proper answer to this question depends on where we are and where we have been, and it includes history.) What is our condition? (This is a practical question.) What are our abilities? (This also is a practical question. It refers to abilities that are proven, not to abilities that are theoretical or potential, such as "aptitude" or I.Q.) What appropriately may we do in our own interests here? (And this question submits to the standard of the health of the place.) (Berry, 2000b, pp. 13, 14).

Interviewer: Okay. Propriety. Anything else?

Berry: We should value familiarity above innovation. . . . There is no reason that familiarity cannot be a goal just as worthy, demanding, and exciting as innovation—or, as I would argue, much more so. It would certainly give worthwhile employment to more people. And in fact its boundaries are much larger. Innovation is limited always by
human ingenuity and human means; familiarity is limited only by the limits of life. The real infinitude of experience is in familiarity. . . .

If local adaptation is important, as I believe it unquestionably is, then we must undertake . . . the effort of familiarity. In doing so, we will confront the endlessness of human knowledge, work, and experience. But we should not mislead ourselves: We will confront mystery too. There is more to the world, and to our own work in it, than we are going to know. . . .

Over a long time [a locally adapted culture] learns to conform its artifacts to the local landscape, local circumstances, and local needs. This is exactly opposite to the way of industrialism, which forces the locality to conform to industrial artifacts, always with the most dreadful consequences to the locality (Berry, 2000b, pp. 138-141).

**Interviewer:** Mr. Berry, how does this work as you work at home?

**Berry:** [In 1969, I made these journal notes when we had returned to Kentucky from California.]

"Tanya says one reason we are happy here is that we are learning where to expect things to happen.

"At home the great delight is to see the clover and grass now growing on places that were bare when we came. These small healings of the ground are my model accomplishment—everything else I do must aspire to that. While I was at that work the world gained with every move I made, and I harmed nothing. Our vision of what we wanted here is fleshing itself out. What we have planted is growing. It becomes clearer what must be planted next" (Berry, 1972, p. 145).

"There has been a good deal of awkwardness and a lot of waste—of effort and time and money. We have invested in the wrong tools and the wrong projects, have become ensnarled in bad plans, have been too slow to recognize the obvious. That is, we often have, not always. But by this awkwardness and this partial success we can see that we have not got to where we are by anything so simple as deciding what we wanted to do and then doing it—as if we had shopped in a display of lives and selected one. We have, instead, in the midst of living, and with time passing, been discovering how we want to live, and inventing the ways" (Berry, 1972, p. 54).

**Interviewer:** I can see how familiarity and propriety walk hand in hand. Mr. Berry, what about waste? Industrialism seems to perpetuate that. Not that it is only the fault of manufacturers, since we are all somewhat complicit on the problem of waste.

**Berry:** In natural or biological systems, waste does not occur. And it is easy to produce examples of nonindustrial human cultures in which waste was or is virtually unknown. All that is sloughed off in the living arc of a natural cycle remains within the cycle; it becomes fertility, the power of life to continue. In nature death and decay are
necessary—are, one may almost say, as lively—as life; and so nothing is wasted. There is really no such thing, then, as natural production; in nature, there is only reproduction (Berry, 1981, p. 117).

A Guru: It is very difficult to recognize, let alone correct, the collision course we are set upon. By merely speeding up the machine of traditional hierarchically controlled organizations, we are reinforcing the collision course of our ‘outlaw’ industrial system.

What I mean by ‘outlaw’ is [as Mr. Berry has aptly explained] that we are living outside the laws of nature. No engineer would expect to build an airplane that violated [the] laws of aerodynamics, that had negative lift, or build a chemical refinery that violated the law of conservation of matter and energy. Yet we are together running an economic system that violates the basic laws of natural systems, and just hoping that we can keep it going long enough that the problems will have to be solved by someone else.

[What we have heard is true:] There is no ‘waste’ in nature—all outputs or by-products of one natural system are inputs or nutrients to another. But we run an economic system that truly produces waste, visible and invisible by-products of our industrial processes that can go nowhere—they just ‘pile up’. Never before in the history of life on this planet has there been a species that systematically destroyed other species—until us. Does any species have a right to do that? (Peter Senge cited in Gibson, 1998, p. 126).

Berry: The economy of industry is, typically, an extractive economy: It takes, makes, uses, and discards; it progresses, that is, from exhaustion to pollution. Agriculture, on the other hand, rightly belongs to a replenishing economy, which takes, makes, uses, and returns. It involves the return to the source, not just of fertility or of so-called wastes, but also of care and affection (Berry, 1987, p. 124).

Interviewer: Which brings us back to propriety and restraint. These are disciplines of practice. More deeply, what are the virtues of a man or woman who is committed to care, familiarity, working well within ignorance, and stewardship?

Berry: No one can make ecological good sense for the planet [as those who want us to “think globally” would have us to do]. Everyone can make ecological sense locally, if the affection, the scale, the knowledge, the tools, and the skills are right.

The right scale in work gives power to affection. When one works beyond the reach of one’s love for the place one is working in and for the things and creatures one is working with and among, then destruction inevitably results. An adequate local culture, among other things, keeps work within the reach of love.

The question before us, then, is an extremely difficult one: How do we begin to remake, or to make, a local culture that will preserve our part of the world while we use it? We are talking here not just about a kind of knowledge that involves affection but also about a kind of knowledge that comes from or with affection—knowledge that is
unavailable to the unaffectionate and that is unavailable to anyone in the form of “information.”

What, for a start, might be the economic results of local affection? We don’t know. Moreover, we are probably never going to know in any way that would satisfy the average dean or corporate executive. The ways of love tend to be secretive and, even to the lovers themselves, somewhat inscrutable.

The real work of planet-saving will be small, humble, and humbling, and (insofar as it involves love) pleasing and rewarding. Its jobs will be too many to count, too many to report, too many to be publicly noticed or rewarded, too small to make anyone rich and famous (Berry, 1993, pp. 23, 24).

If we can’t know with final certainty what we are doing, then reason cautions us to be humble and patient, to keep the scale small, to be careful, to go slow (Berry, 2000b, 151).

Scene 5: “What Can I Do?”

At the start of this scene, the Interviewer and Wendell Berry are seated next to each other at the table, alone. The rest of the players have left the stage area.

IWB

Interviewer: Finally then, what can one do? From where I am in the city, as a leader here, what actions might I take? Join a protest movement for a healthy planet? Start an environmental organization?

Berry: What is wrong with our cities—and I don’t see how you can have a great civilization without great cities—may be that the mode of life in them has become almost inescapably organizational.

It used to be that every time I heard of some public action somewhere to promote some cause I believed in, I would be full of guilt because I wasn’t there. If they were marching in Washington to protest the war, and if I deplored the war, then how could my absence from Washington be anything but a sin? That was the organizational protestant conscience: in order to believe in my virtue I needed some organization to pat me on the head and tell me I was virtuous. But if I can’t promote what I hope for in Port Royal, Ky., then why go to Washington to promote it?

What succeeds in Port Royal succeeds in the world (Berry, 1972, pp. 51, 52).

Interviewer: Then what action can I take that will make some sort of difference? How can I be a positive influence?
**Berry:** [Some] actions are . . . more complete than others, and the more complete the action, the more effective it is as a protest. What, then, is a complete action? It is, I think, an action which one takes on one's own behalf, which is particular and complex, real not symbolic, which one can both accomplish on one's own and take full responsibility for. There are perhaps many such actions, but certainly among them is any sort of home production. And of the kinds of home production, the one most possible for most people is gardening. . . .

A garden . . . is a solution that leads to other solutions. It is a part of the limitless pattern of good health and good sense (Berry, 1981, p. 167-170).

**Interviewer:** Final words, Mr. Berry?

**Berry:** If we are to hope to correct our abuses of each other and of other races and of our land, and if our effort to correct these abuses is to be more than a political fad that will in the long run be only another form of abuse, then we are going to have to go far beyond public protest and political action. We are going to have to rebuild the substance and the integrity of private life in this country. We are going to have to gather up the fragments of knowledge and responsibility that we have parcelled out to the bureaus and the corporations and the specialists, and we are going to have to put those fragments back together again in our own minds and in our families and households and neighborhoods. We need better government, no doubt about it. But we also need better minds, better friendship, better marriages, better communities. We need persons and households that do not have to wait upon organizations, but can make necessary changes in themselves, on their own (Berry, 1972, pp. 79, 80).

With the urbanization of the country so nearly complete, it may seem futile to the point of madness to pursue an ethic and a way of life based upon devotion to a place and devotion to the land. And yet I do pursue such an ethic and such a way of life, for I believe they hold the only possibility, not just for a decent life, but for survival. And the two concerns—decency and survival—are not separate, but are intimately related. For, as the history of agriculture in the Orient very strongly suggests, it is not the life that is fittest (by which we have meant the most violent) that survives, but rather the life that is most decent—the life that is most generous and wise in its relation to the earth (Berry, 1972, pp. 70).

**Conclusion**

The conversation in this chapter really happened. I was there. If you had been able to enter my head, you would have been there too. As a consultant, I was familiar with Drucker and the rest of the leadership scholars before I was familiar with Berry. I have imagined him in this conversation with these people hundreds of times. Imagining
this has been possible since both the scholars and the farmer have made their ideas retrievable in their large surplus of written materials.

The conversation put down in these pages is of course artificial and dramatic. Everyone, except “The Evil CEO” Al Dunlap, remains fairly calm. A live encounter involving the same characters would probably be emotional, intellectually rich, and controversial as debate among conflicting worldviews would naturally be. In fact, the real conversation I have crafted may be more constructive than a live one.

The conversation on these pages “unfreezes” (Lewin, 1951) our perspectives by showing that there are different ways of viewing the world, the ideal economy for us to practice, the nature of healthy organizations, the definition of success, and the task of good leadership. Such a dialogue compels the reader to reflect and evaluate his or her “theories-in-use” (Argyris & Schön, 1992) and to decide how he or she will interpret the world and determine the values that will be held and, one hopes, lived.

In chapter 7, I will seek for application of Berry’s moral ideology to the task of leadership. By applying his ideas metaphorically and, in a sense, directly, it will be shown that his values are useful for leaders, even those who are not farmers. Berry’s agricultural insights offer guidance to leaders in regard to the nature of the organization, the leadership task, and the character of the leader.
CHAPTER 7

WENDELL BERRY AND A VALUES-BASED METAPHOR FOR LEADERSHIP

When I suggest that Wendell Berry and in particular the agrarian values found in his writings serve as the basis for a values-based model for leadership, it is important to understand what I am not talking about. I am not necessarily talking about a rural or small town "forms" of leadership (Israel & Beaulieu, 1990). I am not suggesting—nor would Wendell Berry—that all would-be leaders move back to a rural community and work on a farm (Berry, 2003a, p. 48). Some perhaps should and some who think they should probably should not. But either way, Berry is among those who understand the synergism between city and farm (Berry, 1993, p. 21).

In this chapter, I would like to try to answer some questions that come out of the previous chapters: (a) Is Berry a leader? (b) Does his agrarian orientation offer any metaphorical insight to the value-based concerns of the organizational leader? (c) Do his writings offer any "real world" suggestions for leaders? (d) How does his value base relate to the moral character of the leader?

Wendell Berry: A Transforming Leader

Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus (1985) describe a leader as "one who commits people to action, who converts followers into leaders, and who may convert leaders into
agents of change” (p. 3). On this definition, Wendell Berry qualifies as a leader.

Consider the following examples:

Mark Musick (2004) writes, “The regional Tilth movement grew out of a speech by Kentucky farmer and author Wendell Berry in Spokane, Washington on July 1, 1974” (p. 30). Berry met with a group at the symposium and when he got home he wrote them a follow-up letter in which he affirmed them as people and affirmed their thinking. He told them

Your symposium . . . proves the existence of a thoughtful and even knowledgeable constituency for a better kind of agriculture. And this constituency is as yet powerless because it has no programs. It has no coherent vision of what is possible. It is without the arguments and proofs—the language—that will make it coherent. (Berry, 1974, ¶ 6)

Berry concluded his letter by offering a challenge that would convert these followers into leaders and agents of change:

And so I’m asking you, from where you are, can you see any possibility of another kind of agricultural symposium—not, this time, that would represent a broad spectrum of opinion, but rather one that would try to bring together the various branches of agricultural dissidence and heresy? Suppose you could get together representatives of farm workers union, NFO and any other such groups, family farmers, urban consumers . . . etc. Could such a meeting happen? . . . I’m not sure what unanimity might be made, but I am sure that it would be the start of something or other that would be useful. . . . Would one or the other of you let me know what thoughts you have in response to this? (Berry, 1974, ¶ 8, 9)

Thirty years later, Musick (2004) reports, “Where once we felt isolated, Tilth people are now joined by a broad base of consumers, chefs, retailers, food writers, church groups, and an increasing number of ag. researchers and educators.” (p. 31). Change, evidently, has occurred. He concludes, “It’s been a long time coming, but the stage is now set for the agricultural renaissance Wendell Berry called for 30 years ago” (p. 31). If, as Burns (1978) says, “the genius of leadership lies in the manner in which leaders see
and act on their own and their followers' values and motivations ... [and] transforming leadership ... occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality (pp. 19, 20), then Berry has been a leader in the case of the Pacific Northwest Tilth movement.

At a 2002 conference on the question of agrarianism at Georgetown University, co-sponsored by the Sierra Club, Wendell Berry ... was praised as the voice of agrarianism and the inspiration for people around the world. As speaker after speaker extolled Berry’s many virtues and wisdom, he allowed as how he felt like Tom Sawyer at his funeral, being able to hear so many good things about him. (Dew, 2002, p. 1)

Inspiring, virtuous, wise. But what about leadership? Joseph Rost (1991) says, “Leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes” (p. 102). Wendell Berry has inspired the Sierra Club members. But has he been part of the “leadership” process?

The Sierra Club has long been known for its conservationist concerns. Preserving wild places has been its objective. Berry (2003a) acknowledges:

I am a conservationist and a farmer, a wilderness advocate and an agrarian. I am in favor of the world’s wilderness, not only because I like it, but also because I think it is necessary to the world’s life and to our own. For the same reason, I want to preserve the natural health and integrity of the world’s economic landscapes, which is to say that I want the worlds’ farmers, ranchers, and foresters to live in stable, locally adapted resource-preserving communities, and I want them to thrive.

One thing that this means is that I have spent my life on two losing sides. (p. 165)

Then, unwilling to divide what he believes must be united, Berry adds, directly:

My sorrow in having been for so long on two losing sides has been compounded by knowing that those two sides have been in conflict, not only with their common enemy, the third side [the land-exploiting corporations], but also, and by now almost conventionally, with each other. . . .
As part of my own effort to think better, I decided not long ago that I would not endorse any more wilderness preservation projects that do not seek also to improve the health of the surrounding economic landscapes and communities. (p. 165)

Dew (2002) observed of the Sierra Club gathering that “although there was much to be depressed about at this conference, there was more to be hopeful about. Wendell Berry says,” she reports, “we must act now, there is not a lot of time” (p. 4). Dew affirms “the fact that more than 300 people devoted a weekend to discussion of agrarianism and homage to Wendell Berry was extremely encouraging” (p. 4). On Berry’s 70th birthday, Mark Engler (2004) wrote,

Before Berry, the gulf between farmers and environmentalists was nearly as deep as that between loggers and tree-sitters. Berry established himself as a key figure bridging a gap filled with mutual suspicion. He was born among older farmers and had returned to their fold. But he had also spent time surrounded by the emerging New Left and had campaigned against wanton destructiveness of strip mining. He was at once a native and a “back-to-the-lander.” He represented the new face of organic farming, and its old face as well. (¶ 11, 12)

Berry found mutual purposes in members of the Sierra Club, conservationists, and environmentalists (not necessarily three different persons) and as a leader, he has nurtured the relationships that have worked toward real change. He leads mostly by writing and in his writing he presents himself as an example, struggling along with others who share his purposes, “to make himself at home” in his place, to take action at home and in his community (Fraser, 2004). He is a participant leader, bringing what he has and who he is to those who share a common interest in working for the health of places and communities.
Wendell Berry's Relationship with the Land as a Metaphor for Values-based Leadership

For the last 100 years, the metaphor of the machine has dominated organizational theory. This can be found in the works of the classical management scholars (Fayol, 1949; F. W. Taylor, 1911) and sociologist Max Weber (Mills & Gerth, 1946). Morgan (1980) notes,

The mechanical imagery is very clear. Machines are rationally devised for performing work in pursuit of prespecified ends; the machine metaphor in organizational theory expresses these ends as goals and the means-end relationship as purposive rationality. . . . The details . . . are drawn from mechanical concepts. They attribute principal importance, for example, to the concepts of structure and technology in definition of organizational characteristics. . . . Indeed, these theories essentially constitute blueprints for such design; they seek to design organizations as if they were machines and the human beings expected to work within such mechanical structures are to be valued for their instrumental abilities. . . . Furthermore, the operation of the whole bureaucratic enterprise is judged in terms of its efficiency. (pp. 613, 614)

Institutionally embodied metaphors such as the machine have numerous value-implications, as Morgan has illustrated. They communicate values about people, success, and the way work is done. Bellah et al., (1991) note,

While we in concert with others create institutions, they also create us: they educate us and form us—especially through the socially enacted metaphors they give us, metaphors that provide normative interpretations of situations and actions. The metaphors may be appropriate or inappropriate, but they are inescapable. (p. 12)

The basic premise of Addai's (1999) research was that “people's everyday metaphors reflect values that are the basis for thinking about leader and follower behavior in context” (p. 1). The machine, certainly, has become an everyday metaphor that has done just that.

Morgan's (1980) note regarding “the other major metaphor in organization theory” (p. 614) is ironic. It is, says Morgan, “organism” and in about 1873, Herbert
Spencer crafted this word into the word “organization.” It refers to “any system of mutually connected and dependent parts constitute so share a common life and focuses attention upon the nature of life activity” (Morgan, 1980, p. 614). One immediately resonates with the resulting tension in organizational theory between these two metaphors:

Whereas in the machine metaphor the concept of organization is as a closed and somewhat static structure, in the organismic metaphor the concept of organization is as a living entity in constant flux and change, interacting with its environment in an attempt to satisfy its needs. (Morgan, 1980, p. 614)

Yet the machine metaphor has dominated. In her dissertation on the use of metaphor in organizational theory textbooks, Kathryn Lusteg (1993) found that the underlying conceptual assumption of this study was that metaphor shapes our perceptual reality, i.e., our values, beliefs, and assumptions about behavior and that organizational culture is based on those same values, beliefs, and assumptions about behavior. . . . The findings suggest that . . . the cluster of dominant metaphors in these textbooks represent the traditional views of classical organizational theory, or rational systems theory as propounded by such early theorists as Taylor, Fayol, Weber, and Simon [emphasis added]. (p. 1)

Wendell Berry has many comments about the machine metaphor. He (2000b) says:

The machine . . . had a certain usefulness as a metaphor. But the legitimacy of a metaphor depends upon our understanding of its limits . . . . When a metaphor is construed as an equation, it is out of control; when it is construed as an identity, it is preposterous. (p. 46)

While not being “value-free,” as I have shown, metaphors are useful in a number of ways. They help us rethink what we think we know. They may affect us emotionally, either in resonance with what we believe or as a challenge to core convictions.

Metaphors give us a way of understanding what we want to do, or must do in life and work. Gareth Morgan (1998) notes,

The nature and effect of metaphor . . . is a primal force through which humans create meaning by using one element of experience to understand another. . . . Metaphor
gives us the opportunity to stretch our thinking and deepen our understanding, thereby allowing us to see things in new ways and to act in new ways. (pp. 4, 5)

Metaphors are also important for understanding leadership. In the current bookstore offerings, metaphors of leadership are being presented in two ways, generally speaking. One is in the offering of persons as metaphors. So we have The Leadership Secrets of Attila the Hun (Roberts, 1987), Lincoln on Leadership (Phillips, 1993), and The Leadership Secrets of Colin Powell (Harari, 2002). Such books offer a “great man” theory that is often inspirational and sometimes instructive. The leader imagines himself or herself leading like Attila, Abe, or Colin and so the subject leader becomes a metaphor of good leadership. Gary Wills (1994) uses historic persons to endorse the contingency theory of leadership.

The other application of metaphor in current use is processes as metaphors. Margaret Wheatley (1999) looks at the processes being uncovered in the new science as useful in understanding organizational leadership. Kevin Kelly (1994, 1998) looks at the process of “networks” in biological systems as a metaphor of the reality he sees in our technologically networked world. He is talking about “the new economy” but leadership hints are stated and implicit in his books.

Some leadership metaphors cross back and forth between person and process. They make talking about the process indivisible from talking about what the leader does. Robert Greenleaf’s “servant-leader” (1977) describes both a kind of person and a way of leading. So does Max DePree’s idea of leadership jazz (1992). Drucker prefers the orchestra/conductor metaphor. Greenleaf’s metaphor was powerful in its irony; no one ever would have thought to think of a leader as, of all people, a servant! Yet therein was its power—to completely reorient culture-bound ideas of leadership. DePree and
Drucker make us smile as our imagination goes to work in the images they describe. First, we attend the jazz concert or orchestra and watch the leader in action. Then, on cue, we imagine ourselves stepping into the leader’s shoes to try leading as he or she did.

The leadership metaphor I want to propose is most like these last ones. Coming out of a look at Wendell Berry, I would like to propose that we consider the leader as farmer of his/her business. While some might think of it like Wheatley’s in that it has a connection to the natural order, it is different. In Wheatley’s metaphor, one must look into a microscope and learn current scientific jargon. Undoubtedly, this is interesting and thought provoking. But my suggestion brings us to familiar things and common language. The context of the farmer metaphor involves what everyone knows: soil, plants, households, and forests.

The trouble is that the farmer metaphor may be 50-100 years too late. Urban and suburbanites are a generation away from firsthand knowledge of farm life. (“I think my mom’s uncle did some farming in the Midwest somewhere.”) A worse reality may be the modern person’s greater knowledge of an agribusiness approach to farming: large monocultures seen on a long drive up California’s San Joaquin Valley or overcrowded dairy farms that can be smelled for miles away.

And yet, a quiescent memory of land, crops, and hard work exists among most of us. Such classics as Where the Red Fern Grows, camping trips, kids singing about “Old MacDonald,” and (not to mention) our continuing need to eat, will not let our minds stray far afield. If that is true then the farm metaphor elicits a “system of associates commonplaces” and “we can say that the principle subject [leader] is ‘seen through’ the metaphorical expression [farmer]—or, if we prefer, that the principal subject is ‘projected
upon the field of the subsidiary subject” (Black, 1962, pp. 40, 41). There may be a gap in both time and geography wherein one must reflect on what meaningfully connects the two ideas, but that does not diminish the metaphor’s usefulness. For example, in his interview with Wendell Berry, Jordan Fisher-Smith (1993) talks of taking a walk with Berry. He reports,

“What I’m going to do here,” says Berry, stopping to show me the view down into a fine stand of medium-age trees, “is grow an old-growth forest. It will take about two hundred years, and I won’t live to see it, but there will be some nice trees here, if somebody doesn’t cut them down.” (¶ 3)

That little scene can be highly instructive as a leadership metaphor. But understanding how it is so will likely require time and thought.

Is the leader-as-farmer metaphor worthwhile at this time in history? It is especially important right now! Joseph Rost (1991) tells us,

The message that futurists keep sending over and over again is that the Western world is at present in a state of transition, a fundamental or paradigmatic transition wherein the values of the industrial paradigm are being transmuted in ways that eventually will produce a new paradigm, a postindustrial paradigm. . . .

Whether we are in transition or are already in a new era, there is a pervasive sense that our values are changing radically, and that the values built into the industrial paradigm are not going to be the ones that support a transformed Western civilization in the postindustrial world.

Leadership is one such value, and it, too, is being transformed. . . .

Indeed, it could be argued that during this time of transition, the crisis in leadership is not that we in the United States and the Western world lack good leaders or that the leaders lack a vision of what is needed . . . but that our school of leadership is still caught up in the industrial paradigm while much of our thought and practice in other aspects of life have undergone considerable transformation to a postindustrial paradigm. We will not resolve that crisis in leadership until scholars and practitioners begin to think radically new thoughts about leadership, until they begin to make quantum leaps in leadership theory, until they develop a new school of leadership that is serviceable to the coming era. When that happens, the new school of leadership can be used to train and develop the thousands—indeed, hundreds of thousands—of local, regional, national, and international leaders who will help propel Western societies into the postindustrial era and who will help shape the future of our civilization and the quality of life of future generations. (p. 100)
What could be more “post-industrial” than an agrarian farmer? What could do more to aid leaders and scholars “still caught up in the industrial paradigm” to think new thoughts about leadership than to leave the factory and head back to the farm?

The metaphor will slam hard into reality at certain points; one cannot consider it too far before one realizes that there is some work—in our industrial world—that should simply not be done. Further, the metaphor is not meant to stay only in imagination and workplace application. That leaders should literally become farmers is not what I am saying. That they should feel encouraged to acquaint themselves with farm and farmer is intended. That they should frequently visit rural America and meet with farm families is desirable. Planting a garden and getting out for extended time in the wilderness will extend the metaphor and bring both authenticity and dimension in the leader’s life.

What follows are two applications of the metaphor made as a contribution to leadership and organizational theory. The first builds off of Bolman and Deal’s “frame model” (2003) and the second is an original conception based on Berry’s concept of the interlocking systems. The models are in some ways repetitious, but bring insight from different vantage points.

**Agricultural Metaphors for Organizations and Leaders**

Based on Bolman and Deal’s Frame Model

Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal’s *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership* (2003) is in its third edition. The authors recognize that in the field of social science, particularly in relationship to the work of organizations, “modern managers trying to get on top of things encounter a cacophony of voices and visions” and they each offer “limited versions of reality but expanded prophetic visions of what the
future holds, along with a definite set of strategies” (pp. 10, 11). They ask us to imagine an executive encountering books on organizational structure, human resources, power and authority, and corporate culture. They then explain,

Our purpose in this book is to sort through the multiple voices competing for managers’ attention. In doing so, we consolidate major schools of organizational thought into four perspectives. There are many ways to label such outlooks—mental models, maps, mind-sets, schema, and cognitive lenses, to name a few. We have chosen the label frames. (p. 12)

Bolman and Deal explain their understanding of frames, based on Goffman, as “windows on the world of leadership and management. A good frame makes it easier to know what you are up against and what you can do about it” (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 12).

Table 5 is reprinted from Bolman and Deal’s (2003, pp. 16, 349) in which their four frames are laid out side by side. The organizational metaphor is presented as well as the leadership task. I have added elements from their leadership metaphor as well.

In summary,

The structural frame emphasizes goals, specialized roles, and formal relationships . . . [For] the human resource frame . . . the key challenge is to tailor organizations to people—to find a way for people to get the job done while feeling good about what they are doing. . . . The political frame . . . sees organizations as arenas, contests, or jungles. Parochial interests compete for power and scarce resources. Conflict is rampant. . . . The symbolic frame . . . sees organizations as cultures, propelled more by rituals, ceremonies, stories, heroes, and myths than by rules, policies, and managerial authority. (Bolman & Deal, 2003, pp. 14, 15)

I resonate with Bolman and Deal’s concept of framing and I appreciate their use of metaphor. However, I have several problems with their concept. For one thing, the metaphor they use for the Structural Frame is a factory (“raw materials in and finished product out”). This image reinforces machine-like thinking. The fact that they have put
Table 5

*Bolman and Deal’s Table 1.1, Overview of the Four-Frame Model*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>Structural</th>
<th>Human Resource</th>
<th>Political</th>
<th>Symbolic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Metaphor for</strong></td>
<td>Factory or machine</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Jungle</td>
<td>Carnival, temple, theater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>organization</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Central concepts</strong></td>
<td>Rules, roles, goals, policies, technology, environment</td>
<td>Needs, skills, relationships</td>
<td>Power, conflict, competition, organizational politics</td>
<td>Culture, meaning, metaphor, ritual, ceremony, stories, heroes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Image of</strong></td>
<td>Social architecture</td>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Inspiration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership metaphor</strong></td>
<td>Analyst, architect</td>
<td>Catalyst, servant</td>
<td>Advocate, negotiator</td>
<td>Prophet, poet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Basic leadership</strong></td>
<td>Attune structure to task, technology, environment</td>
<td>Align organizational and human needs</td>
<td>Develop agenda and power base</td>
<td>Create faith, beauty, meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>challenge</strong></td>
<td></td>
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*Note. Adapted from *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership* (3 ed.) (Table 1.1 & 17.1), by L. G. Bolman and T. E. Deal, 2003, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.*

this frame in the first place communicates, perhaps against their wishes, its priority. I am not suggesting that the Structural Frame is unnecessary, and I have found that much of what they say about it in their book is helpful. My concern is that using the factory and machine metaphors reinforces analogous industrial values. As will be noted below, I have moved the Structural Frame to the third position in the table. (I do this to show that cultural development informs structural development.)

Furthermore, the *jungle* metaphor communicates something (about forest and wilderness areas) that is mostly negative. People are usually thinking of “the jungle” when they say we must “conquer nature.” It also connotes violence as a place of sharp-toothed kings of beasts. This image says something about the nature of conflict in the
political frame that may not be the most helpful. Forests and “the Wilderness” will be
my suggested alternative. And of course, forests, like jungles, have conflict. But as I show below, the forest gives us a chance to illustrate the usefulness of conflict for harmonious organizational life.

A third struggle I have with Bolman and Deal’s metaphors is their lack of connectedness. Factories have nothing to do with families, which have nothing to do with jungles, which have nothing to do with temples. Each metaphor by itself communicates. But would not a cohesive set of metaphors, make them more useable? I think so.

Below, I offer a brief proposal for an untested conceptual model based on Bolman and Deal’s frame metaphors. My model uses Berry’s agrarian context to unify the frames. The individual metaphors, along with their thematic unification, serve to change how we see the organization. An additional benefit of these metaphors is that they will bring leaders (back) into an awareness of land and land-concerns.

The Relational Frame: From “Family” to the (Self-sufficient) “Household”

This frame, says Bolman and Deal (1991), “focuses attention on human needs and assumes that organizations that meet basic human needs will work better than those that do not” (p. 511). They describe human resource leaders as those who value relationships and feelings; they seek to lead through facilitation and empowerment. They tend to define problems in individual or interpersonal terms and look for ways to adjust the organization to fit people—or to adjust the people to fit the organization (for example, through training and workshops). (p. 511)

My alternative metaphor of the household is not far from their family metaphor. It does, in fact, incorporate their idea of family. But it goes beyond meeting needs and
the need to get along with one another to incorporate Berry’s idea of the home economy—a context of independence and self-sufficiency. He says (to illustrate my point), “In my household, we produce much of our own food and try to do without many frivolous ‘necessities’ as possible” (Berry, 1990b, p. 127). Developing a sustainable workforce is the guiding moral value.

The leader of such a household can be understood as an Empowering Teacher. I might have said “parent” but, on the one hand, I want to avoid the suggestion of a controlling patriarchy (Block, 1993, see chapter 2) while also highlighting a parent’s most significant role. The best parents understand that from Day One, their task is to prepare successors who share their values, have the necessary life-skills, and understand responsibility. “Empowering is the process of instilling confidence, of strengthening and building children up to become more powerful and competent. . . . Successful parenting will result in the children’s gaining as much personal power as the parents themselves have” (Balswick & Balswick, 1991, pp. 103, 105). That task implies formal care as expressed in meeting basic needs and the informal care given out through love, honesty, and confidence-building. It also implies active modeling and collaborating. The parent-leader who is functioning as an Empowering Teacher will do chores and also give chores, showing their meaningfulness in the overall home-system. Learning the “domestic arts” will be fundamental and increasingly complex as children grow older and mature. Berry decries the “unemployment of children” whom, he says, “in viable household . . . economies, would have work to do by which they would be useful to themselves and to others” (1990b, p. 128). Good parent-leaders will recognize diversity in the abilities and temperaments of family members and will celebrate what has been given.
The organization is relational, even before it is structural. Collins's (2001) "Level 5 Leaders" understand this and build stable and sustainable organizations with a passion to see people develop to their maximum potential (pp. 17-40). While the organization is not the be-all/end-all of a person's life developmentally, it is a context where they spend a lot of time. If led by Empowering Teachers, with a sustainable household image in mind, the organization can be a place of growth and meaning.

I am aware that the concept of teacher will need some redefinition at this point. The image of a non-stop talking, professorially postured, academic-type is not what I intend to convey. In an organization we are dealing with adults. That implies the application of adult principles. By Empowering Teacher, I mean something more like what adult educator Jane Vella (1994) describes as "a sound relationship—which implies that there is friendship, but no dependency; fun without trivialization of the learning; dialogue between men and women who feel themselves peers" (p. 65).

The Cultural Frame: From a "Temple/Theatre" to a (Local) "Community"

Deal was one of the pioneer thinkers in the area of corporate cultures (Deal & Kennedy, 1982), so we would expect him to be concerned about the organization as a symbolic culture. Bolman and Deal (1991) say

The symbolic frame sees a chaotic world in which meaning and predictability are social creations, and facts are interpretive rather than objective. Organizations develop cultural symbols that shape human behavior unobtrusively and provide a shared sense of mission and identity. Symbolic leaders instill a sense of enthusiasm and commitment through charisma and drama. They pay diligent attention to myth, ritual, ceremony, stories, and other symbolic forms. (p. 512)

I am proposing a local community as a metaphor for the organization's cultural (or symbolic) frame. Of course, imagining small-town life will require effort on the part

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of us who live in the sprawl of suburbia, what James Howard Kunstler (1993) calls “Noplace” (p. 173). He says, “as our national economy became more gigantic, local economies ceased to matter. And with that, they ceased to be communities in the most meaningful sense, though people and buildings remained” (p. 180). Yet Kunstler suggests that Americans long for what these places were when they did embody a meaningful life and culture. He even believes that “we are entering an era when small towns will be valued again, and that out of necessity we will reinvent truly local economies using local assets and resources” (p. 186). Berry hopes for the same thing, but he is more doubtful.

This metaphor, even more than that of theatre or temple, can help frame our understanding of organizational life. Stories, local community members, and traditions are realities in the life of a long-term traditional neighborhood. Through each of these elements of community life, values are revealed. For example, the mythic persona of “country folk” in contrast with “city people” says something about the town of Springdale’s image of itself as described in the classic study Small Town in Mass Society (Vidich & Bensman, 1960). Imagining the usual idiosyncrasies of neighborhood life—such as gossip and class prejudice—also aid us in thinking through the makings of both stable and unstable cultures.

The metaphor for the leader within the metaphor of the local community is the Helpful Neighbor, or to use a term Berry is fond of, a community member. Part of this is what I described earlier in my discussion of the value of memory, tradition, and storytelling. There is much to learn in this about the organization as a culture as it
develops over time through experiences and perspectives handed down by local people.

The narrator of Berry's short story "Watch With Me" says,

It was a story I never forgot, and as time went on I would pick up bits of it from Braymer Hardy, from Walter Cotman by way of Elton Penn, and from others. But Miss Minnie, I think, understood it better than anybody. . . . She knew pretty exactly by what precarious interplay of effort and grace the neighborhood had lived. (Berry, 2004, p. 123)

When leaders facilitate a culture of storykeeping and storytelling, they confirm the value, for example, of helpful insights related to the precarious interplay of profit-making and social responsibility through which a good organization will live. Bolman and Deal (2003) explain, "Stories . . . convey information, morals, values, and myths vividly and convincingly" (p. 257). Another of Berry's (2004b) narrators, at the close of yet another bit of lore from the Port William storybook, says

That is the story as I heard it many times from Elton Penn—and from Sam Hanks, too, of course, for he had his version of it. . . .

One day, when I happened by to see Miss Minnie, it occurred to me to ask her about that famous trip. She had been long a widow by then, and we neighbors often made a point of happening by. We needed to know that she was all right, but also it was good for us to see her and to have her pleasant greeting. (p. 180)

The leadership implication here is to honor and enjoy the old-timers and to encourage employee-members to stay around in lieu of migrating off to a bigger and better opportunity. The organization as local community practices rituals of mutual concern and care.

Two members of Berry's fictional Port William, Mat Feltner and his son-in-law, Wheeler Catlett, embody the Helpful Neighbor. In Berry's stories, they can be often found doing their own work—farming and lawyering, respectively—as a contribution to the community's health. But they can also be found with other community members, offering needful assistance. Mat (Berry, 2001) helps the Coulter's on their farm, he stepe...
in to organize needful aid for a grieving mother, and he keeps watch on his mentor Old Jack Beechum as Jack grows old.

Certainly, Mat was a leader and mentor in Port William. But in his mind, he was just being faithful to the local community. In his old age, Mat gets lost. Yet his thoughts are not lost to a love that he belongs to, as he belongs to the place and to the light over it. He is thinking of Margaret and of all that his plighting with her has led to. He is thinking of the membership of the fields that he has belonged to all his life, and will belong to while he breathes, and afterward. He is thinking of the living ones of that membership—at work today in the fields that the dead were at work in before them. “I am blessed,” he thinks. “I am blessed.” (Berry, 2004b, p. 306)

Wheeler also endures Old Jack’s crotchety ways (Berry, 2001), helps Elton Penn as a next-generation farmer to secure Jack’s land when Jack passes (Berry, 2004b), and “uses his professional role to preserve and extend the values of the community in whose membership he so persistently believes and trusts” (LeBel, 2003, p. 833).

The guiding moral value here is fidelity. The Helpful Neighbor personifies fidelity to the place and the persons to whom he or she is a member. The organizational leader as Helpful Neighbor is a symbol of fidelity by forsaking exorbitant compensation for the good of all, by keeping his word, and by committing to the organization for the long haul. The leader as Helpful Neighbor will epitomize a culture of trustworthiness, sacrifice, and love.

The Structural Frame: From a “Factory/Machine” to (Organic) “Farm”

Here, Bolman and Deal (1991) are concerned about goals and efficiencies. [This frame] posits that effective organizations define clear goals, differentiate people into specific roles, and coordinate diverse activities through policies, rules, and chain of command. Structural leaders value analysis and...
data, keep their eye on the bottom line, set clear directions, hold people accountable for results, and try and solve organizational problems with new policies and rules or through restructuring. (p. 511)

My metaphor for organizational structure is the organic farm. The popular understanding of “organic” implies the refusal to use chemicals in farm work. But Berry notes,

An organic farm, properly speaking, is not one that uses certain methods and substances and avoids others; it is a farm whose structure is formed in imitation of the structure of a natural system. It has the integrity, the independence, and the benign dependence of an organism. (Berry, 1981, p. 144)

That statement is packed. Berry’s farm has integrity—all the parts fit together appropriately; independence suggests that it is sufficient by itself and that it does not need what it does not already have; benign dependence suggests that it is kind and generous to itself as well as to other living things with whom it shares its place. Berry adds, “What is good for one part is good for another” (p. 144).

Notice the structural design issues he includes as he describes the agriculture he observed in Peru:

In the Andes, the questions of scale and proportion are clearly paramount. The fields have to be the right size; to make them too big would be to destroy them. And there has to be a correct proportion between the number of farmers and the acreage of farmed land. If the number of farmers should be reduced by too much, as by the introduction of industrial technology and economics, then priority would shift to production, to the neglect of maintenance, and the land would be lost. Too much food can produce starvation as easily as too little.

What I was thinking, then, looking down at the little fields of the Andes, was that the most interesting, crucial, difficult questions of agriculture are questions of propriety. What is the proper size for a farm for one family in a given place? What is the proper size for a field, given a particular slope, climate, soil type, and drainage? What is the appropriate crop for this field? What is the appropriate kind and scale of technology? (1981, p. 43)
He concludes, “Andean agriculture is a success—has lasted thousands of years on extremely difficult terrain—because it has so far answered such questions correctly” (p. 43). Of his first visit to Tuscany in Italy, Berry (2003b) admired their farms. He said,

> It was a way of farming that was lovingly adapted to its place. It was highly diversified. It wasted nothing. It was scaled to permit close attention to details. It was beautiful. . . . Because local adaptation is never perfect and never final, but is necessarily a continuous process, people must be free to develop and apply new knowledge and so correct themselves. (pp. 175, 178)

A close look at Berry’s description will reveal connections to Bolman and Deal’s (2003) concerns for structural design: diversification, attention to details, process, knowledge, and correction. They acknowledge that

> at the heart of organizational design are the twin issues of differentiation and integration . . . There is not one best way to organize. The right structure depends on prevailing circumstances and considers an organization’s goals, strategies, technology, and environment. (p. 67)

They then offer an extended section reviewing various ways of structuring an organization including Henry Mintzberg’s (1979) five structural configurations (Bolman & Deal, 2003, pp. 72-80). They conclude, “A given resolution of structural tensions may be right for a particular time and circumstance, but changes in the organization and its environment eventually require some form of structural adaptation” (p. 92). What they are suggesting here is a fairly organic approach to organizing and, at times, reorganizing.

But in the matter of structure, Bolman and Deal do not include affection, scale, and beauty. Nor do they acknowledge the organization’s potential (as a collective of free, intelligent persons) to initiate its own redesign. Of hierarchical structure, Berry (1983) says,

> It is . . . true that human hierarchies that are inflexible or arbitrary or oppressive are evil. The best of American and other national histories has been made in opposition to that kind of hierarchy; one of the best human traits is the impulse to resent and
resist it. . . . But if we ask if hierarchies exist, the answer is simply yes; they exist, everywhere, all the time. They exist in nature as what are called “food chains.” They exist in our everyday thinking and doing, otherwise we would be paralyzed, would have no agenda; all claims on our attention would be equal, and so would cancel each other. And among all creatures there are hierarchies of ability, intelligence, and power. These discrepancies which exist by nature, define, among humans, the need for moral law and governmental justice. The ideal has always been a *just* hierarchy, not *no* hierarchy. (pp. 134, 135)

The metaphor for the leader in this frame is of course the Farmer-Steward. The implication, in drawing upon all that has been learned in these pages from Berry, is smaller responsibilities in which leaders can know intimately who and what they are working with. Bigger firms, like bigger farms, lead to a monocultural workforce. Peter Block takes a jab at so-called successful leaders, saying they “begin to believe that a key task is to recreate themselves down through the organization. To make their beliefs and actions reproducible” (Block, 1993, p. 15). Block’s idea of the leader as steward is what I intend by my leader as Farmer-Steward metaphor:

Stewardship asks us to be deeply accountable for the outcomes of an institution, without acting to define purpose for others, control others, or take care of others. . . . Stewards can ask that each member of the organization decide what the place will become. . . . Ownership and responsibility have to be felt strongly at every level—from bottom to top. . . . Each member needs to believe the organization is theirs to create if any shift is to take place. . . . Setting goals for people, defining the measures of progress toward those goals, and then rewarding them for reaching them does not honor their capabilities. (pp. 18, 19, 21, 22)

Block explains that stewardship is “to honor what has been given to us, to use power with a sense of grace, and to pursue purposes that transcend short-term self-interest” (p. 22). The structural frame is like a farm. The structural leader, like “a family farmer, for instance, will walk his fields out of interest; the industrial farmer or manager only out of necessity” (Berry, 1997, p. 188). The moral value to be pursued is *propriety*.
In *A World Lost* (2002), Andy Catlett recalls a field that “was beautifully laid out, so that all the rows followed the contours of the ridge... The design of the field would have been my father’s work: a human form laid lovingly upon the natural conformation of the place” (p. 317). Andy then recalls something of a vision he had, a point of comprehension as he looked at the field:

I saw how beautiful the field was, how beautiful our work was. And it came to me all in a feeling how everything fitted together, the place and ourselves and the animals and the tools, and how the sky held us. I saw how sweetly we were enabled by the land and the animals and our few simple tools. (p. 318)

The Political Frame: From the “Jungle” to a (Mysterious) “Forest”

Finally, Bolman and Deal (1991) describe the political frame as “arenas of continuing conflict and competition among different interests for scarce resources. Political leaders,” they suggest, “are advocates and negotiators who value realism and pragmatism. They spend much of their time networking, creating coalitions, building a power base, and negotiating compromises” (p. 512).

This frame most troubled me. Perhaps my generation’s image of corruption at the highest levels of government has swayed me. Dever (1997), adapting Bolman and Deal, applies the metaphor of the warrior here. He says, “In the face of external threats or internal weaknesses, the leader must marshal the forces for combat or take decisive action to correct or purge” (¶ 8). He then states that

[Peter] Senge makes clear that he has little affinity for the martial virtues and the conditions that call them forth (Kofman & Senge, 1993). Nevertheless, that any organization... can summarily dispense with them and survive, much less thrive, is wishful thinking. (¶ 8)
Standing with Senge’s sentiment, as expressed above, I offer the wilderness/forest as an alternative metaphor to Bolman and Deal’s jungle, and in place of their advocate/negotiator and Dever’s warrior, I offer the image of leader as Sympathetic Conservationist. I start with a short discussion of wilderness as a useful metaphor for the so-called political frame.

In some ways, it is unfortunate that the forest is a good illustration a political arena. While ecologists are calling for restraint and selectivity in logging, particularly in old-growth forests, critics of the Forest Service say that the agency, spurred by politics and financial incentives, pursues logging and fire suppression at the expense of sound ecological stewardship. The agency operates under a system that seems designed to put it at odds with itself, its mission and environmentalists. (Green, 2004, p. 26)

Like other political entities, the Forest Service is being accused of “mismanagement, inefficiency, waste, ineptitudes, the disproportionate influence of special interests” (Green, 2004, p. 26) and “lying to the public, ignoring long-festering problems, and serving the timber industry” (p. 57). Recognizing the abuse “there’s a new wave forming—perhaps a tidal wave—for responsibly harvested wood” (Arens, 2000, p. 5). Home Depot, for example, has committed “to stop selling wood from environmentally sensitive areas . . . and to give preference to certified responsibly harvested wood” (p. 5).

This is an adequate example of the political frame where Bolman and Deal (2003) say that, “scarce resources and enduring differences make conflict central to organizational dynamics and underline power as the most important asset” (p. 186). In a forest, there are numerous resources that supply many needs. Its wood, game, and recreational potential are valuable and mostly unavailable anywhere else. Berry understands these as available for our use. But the forest also has needs that it provides
to itself and therefore what it has must be used with care and restraint. The leader as Sympathetic Conservationist must be a persuasive communicator, which is different from being a manipulative persuader who may be imagined in the political frame.

Furthermore, there is conflict in the forest, but that conflict serves its very life. The food chain and the work of seasons, for example, bring life, death, and new life. In fact, death in the forest is a necessary aid in its work at renewing itself. With this image in mind, an organization can welcome hardship, value-diversity, and even “failures” as collaborators in the work of constant renewal. Bolman and Deal (2003) agree that “well-handled conflict can stimulate the creativity and innovation that make an organization a livelier, more adaptive, and more effective place” (p. 198).

Power in the forest belongs to “mystery” and not to those with bigger and faster saws. The ability to take something does not imply greater power, necessarily. For the power to finally refuse provision to a future generation, perhaps, is in the hands of the natural realm itself. This illustrates that organizations and their leaders should not enter the political arena with the word of a warrior. Rather, they do well to enter with humility, with an open and pure heart. If it seems best, the leader may not release the resources to any of the interest groups, may choose to wait patiently for a better time to secure them, or may even look elsewhere for the provision of what is needed. In fact, the leader-as-Sympathetic Conservationist will bear in mind the matter of who “owns” the resources. Here, the consideration is not merely legal, but moral as well. The choice to abandon the need for certain resources at all or to go without them at this time may be the greater good in deference to those who will own the resources in a different time.
Berry (1995) is not always kind to conservationists. He himself is one (by his own definition) and is agreeable with their general cause. But he describes their program as “embarrassingly incomplete” (p. 71). He describes their picture of “deserted landscape or desertified landscape” as “too simple” suggesting that in “an accurate picture of the world . . . we must interpose between the unused landscape and the misused landscape a landscape that humans have used well” (p. 72). He explains, “We must . . . include ourselves as makers, as economic creatures with livings to make, who have the ability, if we will use it, to work in ways that are stewardly and kind toward all that we must use” (p. 72). He then gives two laws, which I think apply to the leader in the politically embroiled and mysterious forest. “[Since] we cannot exempt ourselves from living in this world, then if we wish to live, we cannot exempt ourselves from using the world” and “if we want to continue living, we cannot exempt use from care” (pp. 72, 73). If, in the Sympathetic Conservationist’s work of coalition building or bargaining, he or she is to err, he or she must err in the direction of morality. That would be toward balance, health, and careful use and not to the pressures of lobbies or the temptations of greed. The moral value to be pursued is humility.

In working with differences, scarcity, power, and the potential of conflict, “the Sympathetic Mind leaves the world whole, or it attempts always to do so. It looks upon people and other creatures as whole beings. It does not parcel them out into functions and uses” (Berry, 2003b, p. 91). Berry alerts his fellow conservationists to notice how many people and organizations are now working to save something of value—not just wilderness places, wild rivers, wildlife habitats, species diversity, water quality and air quality, but also agricultural land, family farms and ranches, communities, children and childhood, local schools, local economies. (p. 124)
He then says (and I take liberty to apply this to leaders-as-conservationists in the political arena):

All of these people, who are fighting sometimes lonely battles to keep things of value that they cannot bear to lose, are . . . natural allies. . . . There is no necessary conflict among them. Thinking of [these “special interest groups”], in their great variety, in the essential likeness of their motives and concerns, one thinks of the possibility of a defined community of interest among them all, a shared stewardship of all the diversity of good things that are needed for the health and abundance of the [organization and the] world. (pp. 124, 125)

The Systems Frame: “Small World”

The real world lines between these frames are not as thick as Table 5 suggests. They belong to each other. They need each other. They contain each other. Berry (1981) speaks of

the whole complex of problems whose proper solutions add up to health: the health of the soil, of plants and animals, or farm and farmer, of farm family and farm community, all involved in the same interested, interlocking pattern—or pattern of patterns. (p. 137)

An article from the National Defense University (n.d.), says that

Bolman and Deal suggest the presence of a ‘fifth’ frame that combines elements of each of the other frames. Based on systems theory and cybernetics, the fifth frame suggests, in effect, the use of all the frames in looking at or trying to gain the most appropriate frame of reference to use in analyzing a particular situation. (¶ 37)

Being able to work with patterns and patterns of patterns is important for leadership. This might be thought of as big work, but it is actually small work. It is seeing small things—a product, a team, a policy, a meeting, a job description—in relationship to everything it touches. This is the work Berry does as a poet, looking closely and contentedly at small things in this big world. He says (1972) that poetry “is not only a technique and a medium, but a power as well, a power to apprehend the unity, the sacred
tie, that holds life together” (p. 15). He says that the poetry of this century “has often seemed to lack wholeness and wisdom” (p. 15).

I have chosen the Imaginative Poet as my metaphor for the systemic leader.

While the poet is not a particularly agrarian concept, the idea of poetry is important to Berry and fits well here. He (1983) says,

When poets—and people of any other calling—stay at home the first thing they move away from is professionalism. They move away from “professional standards.” Their work begins to develop under pressure of questions not primarily literary: What good is it? Is it at home here? What do the neighbors think of it? Do they read it, any of them? What have they contributed to it? What does it owe to them? (p. 88)

Berry is illustrating the importance of work that is done up-close. It is not abstract or from a distance but close to its subject. It is done with care because it is done for people known, not just demographically analyzed. The products of such work will be meaningful and good for those who utilize it.

Our organizational society typically thinks of the leader as the visionary. This is the person who usually “comes up with” a plan far from where the actual work is being done. Hear Berry (1983):

The winged imagination, the imagination free and unfettered, is the specialized imagination. The unspecialized imagination may imagine a farm, a favor, a community, a marriage, a family, a household, a city, a poem—but only as a first step. Having imagined one, it will then strive to imagine the relation of that one to all the rest. It is, thus, a disciplined imagination. It is a formal imagination. It is concerned with relation, dependence, propriety, proportion, balance. (pp. 89, 90)

The leader, like the poet, brings wisdom to the solving of problems. Things make sense under the work of the systems-minded leader as Imaginative Poet. “Good artists are people who can stick things together so that they stay stuck,” he explains. “They know how to gather things into formal arrangements that are intelligible, memorable, and
lasting. Good forms confer health upon the things that they gather together” (Berry, 2000b, p. 150). Good poetry and good marriages do this well. Berry (1983) says:

The work of poetic form is coherence, joining things that need to be joined. . . . Forms join, and this is why forms tend to be analogues of each other and to resonate with each other. Forms join the diverse things that they contain; they join their contents to their context; they join us to themselves; they join us to each other; they join writers and readers; they join the generations together, the young and the old, the living and the dead. Thus, for a couple, marriage is an entrance into a timeless community, for the poet (or a reader) is the mastery of poetic form. Joining the form, we join all that the form has joined. (p. 213)

The moral value, in the systemic frame, is integrity. The leader sees that parts are aware of each other and recognizes how they best connect for health and goodness.

Being able to look at the parts and the whole simultaneously, to see how things join each other and also to detect what may affect good solutions is an important ability that qualifies a leader to lead. Bensimon (1989) said of college and university presidents’ abilities to use the different frames:

Those who use several frames and switch from one to another may demonstrate a higher level of cognitive differentiation (e.g., recognizing a variety of aspects) and integration (e.g., developing complex connections among different aspects). Leaders who incorporate elements of several frames are likely to have more flexible responses to different administrative tasks because they have different images of the organization and can interpret events in a variety of ways. (pp. 110, 111)

In her interviews with 32 presidents, Bensimon (1989) found that “thirteen espoused a single frame, eleven espoused two frames, seven espoused three frames, and one espoused four frames” (p. 112). She concluded that “quite a few presidents are not effective” (p. 121).

Land-leaders, organizational leaders, and poets live within contexts of complexity. The farmer is not only a seed-planter and crop-harvester. In other words, the farmer—in reality—exists within each “frame” simultaneously and therefore lives out
various unique, yet interconnected roles. When this complexity is understood and accepted, it provides a united metaphor for leadership and the organizational context, as Table 6 shows.

These metaphors unite the frames and the leadership task into one cohesive and life-giving metaphor. The concepts of dependence, independence, and interdependence are played out here synergistically, rather than as stages or opposing perspectives. The leader’s way is servant-oriented and implies a person of virtuous character. Yet as it now stands, this use of Wendell Berry’s work as a metaphor is inadequate. In fact, care must be taken in the use of someone’s thoughts, especially when their intention is to be literal, not metaphorical, as I think is the case with Wendell Berry. In his dissertation, *Pauline Metaphors Describing Christian Leadership*, Dennis Michael Martin (1980) notes that “the basic principle that an author’s metaphors must not be interpreted in a manner which is contradictory with the same author's literal statements related to the same subject.” With this caution before me, for example, it would be an inappropriate use of Wendell Berry’s farm metaphor if it were allowed to have use and application by leaders whose work contributes toward the proliferation of nuclear waste or chemically based farming strategies. As it stands now, with the frame approach alone, that would be possible. The metaphor above is mostly about the organization internally. It does not speak to the products or services that are provided, nor does it consider the impact of the organization outside itself. Therefore, a second metaphorical application is needed.
Table 6

*Kaak’s Five-Frame Model*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>Relational</th>
<th>Cultural</th>
<th>Structural</th>
<th>Political</th>
<th>Systemic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Metaphor for</strong></td>
<td>Self-sufficient</td>
<td>Local Community</td>
<td>Organic Farm</td>
<td>Mysterious Forest/Wilderness</td>
<td>Small World</td>
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<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td>Household</td>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>Central Concepts</strong></td>
<td>Needs, skills,</td>
<td>Stories,</td>
<td>Patterns,</td>
<td>Difficulty,</td>
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<td>memories,</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>meaning,</td>
<td>seasonal</td>
<td>ignorance,</td>
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<td>helpfulness,</td>
<td>awareness,</td>
<td>conflict,</td>
<td>assessment,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>common good</td>
<td>planning</td>
<td>power</td>
<td>vision,</td>
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<td><strong>Leadership</strong></td>
<td>Empowering Teacher</td>
<td>Helpful Neighbor</td>
<td>Farmer-Steward</td>
<td>Sympathetic</td>
<td>Imaginative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Metaphor</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Conservationist</td>
<td>Poet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Basic Leadership</strong></td>
<td>To prepare self-sufficient workers by investing what is necessary so that they might have meaningful work that can be done independently and skillfully</td>
<td>To facilitate the awareness and enhancement of the organization’s culture, traditions, and stories. Also to detect cultural dysfunction and to encourage an ethos of interdependence</td>
<td>To frequently discern and cooperate with the design and objectives inherent in the organization, appropriately dependent upon its people, place, capacity, and unique potential</td>
<td>To work with those who need resources and those who have resources (internal and external suppliers) to identify and meet real needs for the organization’s overall well-being</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Challenge</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Key Value</strong></td>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>Fidelity</td>
<td>Propriety</td>
<td>Humility</td>
<td>Integrity</td>
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The Leader-as-Farmer Metaphor Applied to Berry’s Concept of Interlocking Systems

In supposing, Berry reiterates his primary value. This is the most fundamental concept in all his writings since this provides the ontological reasoning for everything else he sees, says, or recommends. Without the “total economy” in mind, the leader’s stewardship will be sloppy or even damaging.

For most Westerners, leaders and non-leaders alike, our view of reality looks something like the illustration in Figure 7.

![Figure 7. A dichotomized view of reality.](image)

Life has three boxes and most suburbanites stay in the top one. There are, we know, entrances to other places and “you can get there from here.” But who would want to, for very long, at least? Rural/farm towns are “depressing” (because we think about all the work people do there and the poverty that characterizes so many of them) and while
nature is inspirational, it is fine for just short visits and only if you are comfortable with “roughing it” for a few days without the television. These three realms are distant in our minds and are therefore unconnected to each other, we think.

A better picture of reality, the picture that Berry is painting for us, takes each of the frames we have just described and illustrates them, not metaphorically, but in reality, as in Figure 8:

![Figure 8. The interlocking systems of reality.](image)

We necessarily live within each of the interlocking circles. We may try, but we cannot escape. We may wish to ignore the edges further out from our own self-interest, but in so doing we will damage our self-interest. We may be unaware, as I think so many are, of this view of the world, but those who are unaware best beware because the
domains remain healthy only in connection with one another. What is more, damage in one area will result in damage to another area, always moving closer to home.

Now I must return to the subject of leadership. Peters and Waterman (1982) recommended MBWA—Managing By Walking Around. What I am recommending—what Berry is recommending—is MBWF—Managing By Walking Further. A majority of the books on leadership and organizations are about what happens within the “four walls” of organizational life. (That’s “where I work,” a small box within the top box shown in Figure 7.) The concern for shareholders, who are usually not employees, is part of the four-walls mentality. Talking about stakeholders very rarely gets outside those walls in recognition that there are others beyond those who work here and those who hold stock here. Of his company, Tom’s of Maine, Tom Chappell (1999) rightly notes,

> The goal [of our company] is for every move, every business strategy, to be driven by not the market but what we believe in. We care about formulating our products with natural ingredients; we care about treating our employees fairly and decently; we care about families, neighborhoods, communities and the natural world. Our job is to serve all those constituencies. (p. 27)

This is good, but I am suggesting an even more explicit application. I am suggesting (a) an awareness of one’s existence at every point in the interlocking systems of life and (b) one’s necessary influence, or impact, within every one of the circles.

1. Our organization exists as part of a society of organizations.

2. We are not alone and therefore must compete to be the best!

Most industrial era leaders stop here, thinking, “We are not alone in this industry and so we need to fight to be #1!” Most leaders dig in their heels in and compete hard on the basis of organizational interests. They dig in, usually to the death—either their own, their organization’s, their family’s, or the competition’s. But Berry (1983) informs us that the
system of systems involves three different kinds of interest: ontogenetic: self-interest which is at the center; phylogenetic: humanistic interest reaching through family, community, and agriculture; and ecogenetic: “the interest of the whole ‘household’ in which life is lived” (p. 48).

With that in mind, let me restate #2 with a more holistic sense of awareness:

2. We are not alone in this society or within this ecology. That is good because together we contribute toward the health of people and places.

3. We exist in a culture (or community, or neighborhood) and the way we exist here will contribute either toward the health and longevity of this culture or toward her moral, environmental, and/or economic decline. The products and service we provide will contribute either toward the health and longevity of this culture and surrounding communities or toward their moral, environmental, and/or economic decline.

4. We exist on land that contains us. For some, that is a city whose well-being is everyone’s business, most of all those who would be community leaders. But the main point here is that we exist by land that sustains us. It may be nearby, just outside the city, or many miles away, but we are dependent upon it and we must understand our moral and practical requirement to ensure its well-being. The question is, How does our product or service depend on the land and how are we being careful to preserve the source? The source is the land itself and those who serve it and us in stewarding it. The source is soil, farm families, and local communities.

5. Finally, we exist within all of creation. The creation has an order and a
harmony. When we pollute that order or disrupt that harmony, there will be a cost—
either to us, directly, or "externally"—to the far-away regions that our local work has
infected, or to future generations.

The concept of the interlocking system of systems is meant to locate the leader in
her place. That place is the literal ground, home, and community in which she resides
and works but it also extends to the edges of this mysterious world. The Leader-as-
Farmer who thoughtfully and actually walks into each circle will be more thoughtful
about the necessity (or not) of her work and the products or services being offered. This
walk will inform the leader about the consequences of her work, for good or for naught.
He or she will see health as well as unhealth in families, communities, source, and culture
and will be forced with the moral decision of what they and those they lead can do, or
what they must stop doing. Berry (1983) says, "There is no reliable standard for behavior
anywhere within the system of systems except truth" (p. 48). They will discover that
they must decide to be either a leader of good character or bad and to craft an
organization with moral or immoral concern.

These metaphors can help leaders understand themselves, design a value-driven
organization, and develop ethical leaders and team members. Bennis (1991) notes,

It is not the articulation of a profession or organization's goals that creates new
practices but rather the imagery that creates the understanding, the compelling moral
necessity for the new way. The clarity of the metaphor and the energy and courage
its maker brings to it are vital to its acceptance. (p. 169)

Agrarian Values and Virtuous Leadership

An attempt to frame the organization and the leadership task by applying agrarian
metaphors helps to unify the organization conceptually and points toward land-based
concerns. As I have shown, it also gives eyes to see the moral values of sustainability, fidelity, propriety, humility, and integrity, all built around the idea of health—physical, agricultural, moral, social, etc.—total health. Furthermore, when the leader and the organization at large becomes aware that it lives within the interlocking system of reality, the sense of moral duty to additional stakeholders—all the way to source—deepens. But duty alone is probably not maintainable. The sense of personal duty must be transformed into personal virtue. While I grant that some moral duties may not yet have been upgraded to value-convictions, I hope to show that we are likely to fail these duties unless they are grafted into our character. It is likely that leaders who are maturing in moral virtue by carrying out ethical practices of leadership will simultaneously be creating moral and healthy organizations.

The concept of virtue ethics goes back to Aristotle (1952), was brought out of the philosophical closet in 1958 by Elizabeth Anscombe (1997), and was recently made (academically) popular through Alasdair MacIntyre’s book *After Virtue* (1981). Proponents believe that virtue ethics can solve the problems they find in Kant’s deontology, Mills’s utilitarianism, and Rawls’s contractarianism. What is more, a few people are talking about the place of virtues in the tasks of leadership and organization.

The Virtuous Person Described

Frankena (1973) says, “A virtue is not a principle of [duty or ought]; it is a disposition, habit, quality, or trait of the person or soul, which an individual either has or seeks to have” (p. 63). The goal, according to Aristotle, is human and societal flourishing, which I translate as “health at every level.” Thus, virtue ethics is not
interested in merely solving moral predicaments, but in making moral people. Crisp and Slote (1997) explain:

The virtuous person [finds] . . . no struggle to act on his view of the requirements of the situation. And, because there is no struggle, there may in fact be no actual ‘balancing’: he may just see what is called for, and do it. (p. 14)

But, notes Frankena (1973),

Through no fault of his own, the agent may not have known all the relevant facts. What action the principles of morality called for in this situation may not have been clear to him, again through no fault of his own, and he may have been honestly mistaken about his duty. (p. 66)

Here, McDowell (1997) says, with Socrates, “virtue is knowledge” (p. 141). The implication, he says, is that the virtuous person “gets things right,” having “a reliable sensitivity to a certain sort of requirement which situations impose on behaviour” that might also be called “a sort of perceptual capacity” (p. 142).

Where McDowell (1997) describes virtue as knowledge, Greenleaf (1977) might say the virtuous leader has foresight. Heifetz (1994) may say she has adaptive capacity. Mills might see this much more broadly and call it the sociological imagination. Of leaders, Captain Charles A. Pfaff (n.d.) suggests:

The good leader must therefore cultivate the ability to perceive and correctly and accurately describe his situation and include in this perceptual grasp even those features of the situation that are not covered under the existing rule. James Wallace describes virtue as conscientiousness toward obligations. (¶ 41)

In his poem, Remembering My Father, Berry (1998a) describes the instruction his father gives him to “look”:

He said his father’s saying.
We were standing on the hill
To watch the cattle grazing
As the gray evening fell.

“Look. See that this is good,
And then you won’t forget.”
I saw it as he said,
And I have not forgot.

(p. 170)

Kimberly Smith (2003) sees Wendell Berry’s idea of grace as “a sensitivity to the situation combined with a sense, below the conscious level of thoughts, of what to do—and what one can do—in this context. Importantly,” she says, “the concept of grace assumes that the context presents obstacles and poses limits; grace is achieved by responding to these challenges” (p. 160). She reasons from Berry’s writings that “grace is what one achieves when one practices all the virtues well, it is the good toward which a virtuous person aims” (p. 161).

Virtues Developed Through Practices

So then, how does one develop the virtues? Aristotle (1952) says that doing so is different from developing the ability to see or hear, which are abilities we had before we used them.

The virtues we get by first exercising them, as also happens in the case of the arts as well. For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them, e.g. men become builders by building and lyre-players by playing the lyre; so too we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts. (Book II, Ch. 1, 1103a 30—1103b 5)

Berry’s word for practices is discipline.

I believe the closer we come to correct discipline, the less concerned we are with ends, and with questions of futurity in general. Correct discipline brings us into alignment with natural process, which has no explicit or deliberate concern for the future. (Berry, 1972, p. 138)

Earlier in that same essay Berry noted, “The discipline of ends is not discipline at all. The end is preserved in the means” (p. 131). That is why Smith (2003) says, “Practices
and virtues are thus mutually constitutive” (p. 161). MacIntyre (1981) describes such practices this way:

By a ‘practice’ I am going to mean any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the results that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended. (p. 175)

In other words, practicing a discipline that approximates a virtue, even in its simplest form, is the means toward developing the virtue in its most mature expression. Pfaff (n.d.) explains, “Becoming a good leader does not consist merely in learning and keeping principles, but in developing one’s character by practicing certain sorts of behavior until they become habitual, that is, part of one’s character” (¶47). Berry (2003) concurs, saying,

The danger . . . is that people will think they had made a sufficient change if they have altered their “values,” or had a “change of heart.” . . . The trouble with this is that a proper concern for nature and our use of nature must be practiced, not by our proxy-holder, but by ourselves. A change in heart or of values without a practice is only another pointless luxury of a passively consumptive way of life. (p. 64)

The Role of Values

The focus of the quotations from Pfaff and Berry deals with virtuous practice as an aspect of character development. Yet they introduce us to another important part of that very process. Pfaff (n.d.) talks about “principles” and Berry about “values.” Are these important overall? They are, because they serve to provide the knowledge to help people “get things right,” to develop “perceptual capacity” (McDowell, 1997, p. 142), and to “look [and] see that this is good” (Berry, 1998a, p. 170). This returns us to Kant’s ethics of duty (i.e., deontology) as Frankena (1973) notes,
I propose . . . that we regard the morality of duty and principles and the morality of virtues or traits of character not as rival kinds of morality between which we must choose, but as two complementary aspects of the same morality. . . . To parody a famous dictum of Kant's, I am inclined to think that principles without traits are important and traits without principles are blind. (p. 65)

I am inclined to agree. So does environmental virtue ethicist Philip Cafaro (2001). He says that self-interested arguments (of which are included virtue ethics) “should [not] supplant appeals to duty or to the intrinsic value of wild nature. Rather, they should supplement them. As I see it, deontology and virtue ethics are the two necessary halves of a complete ethics” (p. 5, note 6).

Berry’s primary value provides a duty that, as noted above, offers universal appeal to all mankind. It is utilitarian in that at some point down the line, violation of this duty will result in the devastation of agricultural and cultural regions. Berry’s secondary values, as I have presented them in chapter 4, are not meant to be a final codified list of dos and don’ts. They amplify how Berry understands the primary value may be actuated. They provide the agrarian’s informed inclination toward what is good. In so doing, they suggest certain virtues that individuals, leaders, and even organizations may wish to develop within themselves for the sake of healthy people and healthy economies.

Are Virtues Possible in Industrial Business?

There are those who are doubtful about the potential of business being virtuous. First among them is Aristotle. He “declared that [trade for profit was] wholly devoid of virtue and called those who engage in such purely selfish practices ‘parasites.’ All trade, he believed was a kind of exploitation” (Solomon, 1996, p. 48). Berry (1987), equally skeptical, points out:
When we make our economy a little wheel turning in opposition to what we call “nature,” then we set up competitiveness as the ruling principle in our explanation of reality and in our understanding of economy; we make of it, willy-nilly, a virtue. But competitiveness, as a ruling principle and a virtue, imposes a logic that is extremely difficult, perhaps impossible, to control. That logic explains why our cars and our clothes are shoddily made, why our “wastes” are toxic, and why our “defensive” weapons are suicidal; it explains why it is so difficult for us to draw a line between “free enterprise” and crime. (p. 72)

Or, as Bill Shaw (1996) tactfully explains:

Virtues will foster economic well being, though not the efficiency-bent, wealth-maximizing, economy that some theorists envision. Virtue stems from an internal source, that is, from the excellence of character that has long been acknowledged as the distinctive feature of virtue in the Aristotelian tradition. Not all efficiency-producing behaviors are virtuous. The reason is that virtuous behavior is identified with and advances, a balanced and coherent notion of the good, and economic well being is only part of that good, not its entirety. It follows, then, that virtuous behavior may advance some non-material aspect of the good even though that behavior is not efficient in the economic sense. (¶ 19)

Virtues are self-interested in that they craft the one who possesses them into an individual of moral character. But they are others-oriented in that when practiced, they usually result in goodness and well-being for others. But who are the “others?” What Cafaro (1997) says of Henry David Thoreau’s written work may also be said of Berry’s:

Because *Walden* is a work in virtue ethics, it is hard for some readers—and most contemporary philosophers—to see it as a work of ethics at all. For we tend to define ethics as a discipline that specifies proper interpersonal relations, or even more narrowly, our strict obligations toward one another. (pp 47, 48)

For Thoreau and Berry, others includes both human and non-human living things. It includes places as well as the inhabitants of places. Because many businesses and those who lead them believe that they are to be competitive, exploitive, and expanding, environmental/agrarian ethics are hardly mentioned in business books unless those books are focused on the topic such as Paul Hawken’s *The Ecology of Commerce* (1993). Yet
leaders have a responsibility to lead their organizations with this kind of sensitivity, this kind of value-based, virtue-directed knowledge and practice. Is this possible?

Translating Values Into Virtues for Organizational Leaders

Before returning to Bolman and Deal, consider what Berry (1987) has to say about the practice of the virtues:

When the virtues are rightly practiced within the Great Economy [the interlocking system of systems], we do not call them virtues: we call them good farming, good forestry, good carpentry, good husbandry, good weaving and sewing, good homemaking, good parenthood, good neighborhood, and so on. The general principles are submerged in the particularities of their engagement with the world. . . . The work of the small economy, when it is understandingly placed within the Great Economy, minutely particularizes the virtues and carries principle into practice. (p. 74)

Though below I will “particularize” the virtues for the sake of discussion, I appreciate and concur with Berry’s exhortation that they are best described—in this study, for example—as good leadership and good work, rather than as orderliness, fairness, and honesty.

Now, in returning to Bolman and Deal (2003), I would like to expand briefly on what I have already suggested. To summarize, I have said that the metaphor for the Relational Frame is Household and that the metaphor for the leader is Empowering Teacher. The value is sustainability because we are interested in long-term health and capability among our people as both contributors to the organization, as well as the interlocking system of reality as a whole. The value for the Cultural Frame is fidelity because healthy Communities are places of trust, kindness, sacrifice, and longevity. Leaders are known at Helpful Neighbors because they embody these things in the organization and with local communities in mind. The Farm is the metaphor for the
Structural Frame and the value, in view of Berry’s idea of local adaptation, is propriety. The leader is like a Farmer-Steward who is careful to let the context reveal its own design and set its own goals. He asks, over and again, “What is proper in this place?” The Political Frame is illustrated by the Forest/Wilderness. Leaders are Sympathetic Conservationists who are aware of the many needs and available resources but are also aware of both limitations and restraint. The value which they must embody is humility in the presence of conflict, mystery, and potential. The issue for both “Farmer” and “Conservationist” is to remember not just in-house applications but also broader applications to places, products, and the sources that concern it. Finally, I described the Systemic Frame—which brings a multiframe perspective to a situation being faced—as the Small World. It is small because although the leader is looking at everything, he does so by looking at one thing in detail. This is the work of the leader as Imaginative Poet who identifies reality and gives it a coherent form that creates a unique kind of understanding. The value is integrity in which all the parts are made to fit together, providing coherence and strength. The integrity at issue is not just within the walls of the organization, but also relates to the organization’s integral connection to the rest of reality.

I would now like to suggest the practices that leaders bring to the organizational setting which serve two primary goals: (a) in carrying out these practices, the leader is becoming a virtuous person and virtuous leader and (b) he or she is shaping a virtuous organization.

First, in the Relational Frame, the leader makes thoughtful investments in persons. Without condescension, the leader hopes to improve the members of the organizational
household. Good listening, carefully designed training, trusting teams to make their own decisions, developing leaders at every level, and serving as an exemplar of empowerment will develop the virtues of generosity and care into the leader's character. Furthermore, care for people's families, health, psycho-spiritual well-being, homes, and land will increase the organization's potential for sustainability.

Second, in the Cultural Frame the leader can enhance the sense of fidelity as a value by following through on promises made. This leader develops the virtue of trustworthiness by being available to those in need and seeking the well-being of both the organizational culture and the culture at large. This leader also is known for his or her love because of the kindness and interest shown in others, both old-timers and newcomers. Being a loving and trustworthy leader is further proved by the respect the leader shows in preserving traditions and stories that reveal the unique culture of the organization itself.

Third, the leader in the Structural Frame develops virtues of good judgment and orderliness when modeling behaviors that promote organizational propriety. Fundamentally, this means the leader is personally making good choices and living an orderly life within the interlocking systems of reality. There will be no bifurcation in the importance of propriety both at home and at work. Leadership practices will include becoming very familiar with people and their abilities, work patterns, production methods and timelines that are appropriate, the flow of communication, as well as ways to release healthy, meaningful, and quality work. Refusing to remain structurally stuck and being willing to cautiously reorganize for the well-being of the workers and the work will be among the leader's practices.
Fourth, in the Political Frame, the leader will develop practices that develop virtues of *self-control* and *fairness/justice*. Because the Political Frame can mean conflict, the leader who practices peacemaking and seeks to build inner organization and cross-organizational cooperation and collaboration will be forced to grow in being fair above, among, and across various interest groups. When successful, this will help build a humble and harmonious organization in which there is give-and-take, mutual deference, and recognition by all that all are needed. Furthermore, there will be humility toward the source of the available resource. Leaders practice restraint and recognize that just because they can take (or exploit) an available resource, does not mean they should. This includes a humble posture toward people within the organization but also toward places and communities further out that supply materials.

Finally, the Systemic Frame values integrity. By integrity, I mean the sense of connection should exist when the “parts” of the organization are accountable to each other, and the organization as a whole is accountable to the broader society as well as to the land. Integrity is the value, but *honesty* and *wisdom* are the virtues. When a leader sees things clearly, up close, there is the greater potential of seeing things as they are. An honest assessment, from a virtuous leader, will result in an honest representation of that assessment. The practice of truth-telling will go hand in hand with practices that nurture wisdom. If the practice of wisdom is perception that makes sense of what is so that right action can be taken, then wisdom develops as a virtue when leaders embrace complexity, study carefully, seek insight broadly, evaluate patiently, and reflect deeply.

Table 7 illustrates my expanded use of the agricultural metaphors applied to the frame analysis.
Table 7

*Kaak’s Five-Frame Model Expanded*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame</th>
<th>Relational</th>
<th>Cultural</th>
<th>Structural</th>
<th>Political</th>
<th>Systemic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Metaphor for</strong></td>
<td>Self-sufficient</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Organic</td>
<td>Mysterious</td>
<td>Small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td>Household</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Farm</td>
<td>Forest/</td>
<td>World</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wilderness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership</strong></td>
<td>Empowering</td>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td>Farmer-</td>
<td>Sympathetic</td>
<td>Imaginative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Metaphor</strong></td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Neighbor</td>
<td>Steward</td>
<td>Conservationist</td>
<td>Poet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Value</strong></td>
<td>Healthy (whole,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>well, and thriving) people, families, organizations, communities, natural places, economies, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Value</strong></td>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>Fidelity</td>
<td>Propriety</td>
<td>Humility</td>
<td>Integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Practices</strong></td>
<td>Develop skills</td>
<td>Collect &amp; tell</td>
<td>Be familiar</td>
<td>Be quiet,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in workers,</td>
<td>stories,</td>
<td>with ways</td>
<td>Build</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Craft meaning,</td>
<td>Learn from</td>
<td>the</td>
<td>cooperation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Offer grace,</td>
<td>organization’s</td>
<td>organization</td>
<td>&amp; collaboration</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Nurture</td>
<td>history,</td>
<td>orders itself,</td>
<td>within &amp; across</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>independence,</td>
<td>Encourage</td>
<td>Apply</td>
<td>organizational</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Give of self</td>
<td>mutuality</td>
<td>intelligence &amp; local knowledge,</td>
<td>boundaries,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(interdependence)</td>
<td>Remain</td>
<td>Say no.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>dependent on</td>
<td>Hear all sides.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>what is</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key Virtue</strong></td>
<td>Generosity &amp;</td>
<td>Trust-worthiness</td>
<td>Good Judgment &amp;</td>
<td>Self-control</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Care</td>
<td>&amp; Love</td>
<td>Orderliness</td>
<td>&amp; Fairness-Justice</td>
<td>Honest</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>&amp; Wisdom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Berry (1991) says that we can learn about an appropriate form that life can take from exceptional people of our own culture, and from other cultures less destructive than ours. I am speaking of the lives of people who have undertaken to cherish the world and do it no damage, not because they are duty-bound, but because they love the world and love their children; whose work serves the earth they live on and from and with, and is therefore pleasurable and meaningful and unending; whose rewards are not deferred until “retirement,” but arrive daily and seasonally out of the details of the life of their place; whose goal is the continuance of the life of the world, which for a while animates and contains them, and which they know they can never encompass with their understanding or desire. (p. 23)
Conclusion

I personally looked forward to my arrival at this chapter. In that I currently do not share Berry's context in a rural agricultural community, I have relentlessly wondered how his values—with which I so passionately resonate—might apply to leaders like me in urban and suburban settings. I am enthusiastic about the conclusions that this chapter has brought forth.

S.I. Hayakawa (1949) reminds us that "metaphors are not 'ornaments of discourse'; they are direct expressions of evaluations [emphasis added] and are bound to occur whenever we have strong feelings to express" (p. 121). I would hope that metaphors such as leader-as-farmer and the others I have mentioned would take hold and increase passion for the ideas behind them and for the real places farmers represent. Hayakawa also notes, "When metaphors are successful, they 'die'—that is, they become so much a part of our regular language that we cease thinking of them as metaphors at all" (p. 124). That might mean success—the metaphor has come to represent reality. On the other hand, it is possible that the metaphor has lost its punch. What did we ever mean, for example, when we called a factory a "plant," and sent salesmen to the "field" in hopes that they would "land" a big client? Why do we "plow" on a big project, "cultivate" a relationship with customers, "break new ground" in the task of innovation, and "grow" a company? I sense that the metaphors I have gleaned from Berry and offered here will require most of us to relearn agricultural concepts. "Aristotle was disturbed by the lack of virtue among those who wanted to be leaders. He pointed to the need to educate youths for such leadership" (Bass, 1995, p. 51).
Moreover, I am enthusiastic that leaders will take up the challenge to somehow walk into further awareness of the broader influence of their work. If leaders will “walk” (actually and physically, I hope, but at least through research and learning) into the source-places of their materials and meet or imagine “end-users” as healthy households and sustainable social/ecological communities “downriver,” they will have greater potential of becoming more sensitive to the true value (or harm) of what the business they represent is accomplishing.

But naturally, even agri-metaphors and expanded awareness will be minimally transforming without a concern for good values and the possibility of virtuous people. Just the same, a virtuous leader, as I have said here, is incomplete without knowledge of the role he or she plays in designing a virtuous company with a desire for human and ecological flourishing in the larger context in which we all live and work. Perhaps one more image will help. (See Figure 9.)
A  
Successful and Virtuous Leader  
The leader’s life is full of virtue and constantly pouring itself into the business, and those affected by it.

B  
Hillside community  
The Healthy and Virtuous Organizational Community  
The business culture is affected by the leader’s practices, and the resulting work has other people and places in mind.

C  
Farmland/communities  
The Healthy and Virtuous Lands and Communities  
The communities that benefit from good leadership and good work are healthy and can serve as healthy sources for those who serve them.

Figure 9. The impact of virtuous leadership.
CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

The decision to write this dissertation was based on the recognition that the application of Wendell Berry's values to leaders, through the grid of his sociological imagination, had not yet been discussed. The matter of values by itself is a complex and conflicted topic of research and some leadership scholars are looking back at a 100 years of study and wondering if the behavioral sciences were the right tools for studying leadership (Rost, 1991).

Sociologist C. Wright Mills had a similar concern for his discipline and wrote a polemic to say so in 1959, just a few years before he died. Though not appearing as such, *The Sociological Imagination* reflected the method that Mills used and recommended in his social research. This method would most commonly be applied when there was a values clash between a person's biography and social history.

Since postmodern-era values embody such a clash and since leadership theory is in transition—out from the industrial paradigm—it seems that it might be worth giving the floor to an outside voice. That Wendell Berry is an outside voice to the field of leadership would be an understatement. Leadership literature has no knowledge of him and, in fact, why should it? He has not had many kind words for those in corporate and social leadership.
Yet that was and is my interest: the formation of good leadership within the business sectors where leaders live and work. My intent has been to introduce these men and women to a social thinker whose value-base was agrarian and not the urban, industrial values that they work within every day. The research question I sought to answer was this: In what ways do the writings of Wendell Berry, reflecting his sociological imagination, address and advance leadership theory with specific regard for the issue of values?

Summary

This study evolved as follows: After introducing my overall intent (chapter 1), I began an initial review of the major themes contained in this study (chapter 2). Perhaps most important in that chapter was the definition for values that emerged as “preferred moral convictions that guide an individual and/or group in a particular place in which entities, practices, and ends are essentially valuable.”

In looking closely into Berry’s works (chapters 3 and 4), I thought it would be fairly simple to come up with and catalog a set of values. And, since I am familiar with his work, it was taxing, but not unreasonably complicated. It did, however, become clear that I needed (a) to show how his value-laden thinking integrated with the sociological imagination. It was exceedingly satisfying, then, to apply Berry’s work in the essay “Conserving Forest Communities” through that grid. But it was further necessary and satisfying (b) to attempt a label for what Berry offers, in which I settled on the concept of a moral ideology. This moral ideology is not individualistic, but very much contains a social vision as well. After introducing Berry’s primary value as a concern for the health
of land and land-based communities, I cataloged a set of 11 agrarian values that come through clearly in his writings.

As I moved to discuss leadership (chapter 5), I had originally thought I would attempt to apply Berry's values to leadership, in general, as per Joseph Rost's (1991) definition. But as my research proceeded, I realized there would be particular value if I approached leadership from the corporate/business contexts, where the impact of values and virtues so directly touches the world—natural and human. The use of the value-concept is used in many ways by value scholars and practitioners and, in each one, Berry's ideas offer useful guidance. Furthermore, it was satisfying to see that there are leadership scholars who place value on what I consider a version of the sociological imagination.

To further illustrate the value of Berry's "outsider voice" in the leadership conversation, I created a Readers Theatre script in which Berry is interviewed alongside a number of leadership "experts" (chapter 6). The challenge of this chapter was to show that Berry (a) does speak to many of the issues raised in business, organizational, and leadership studies, albeit through the grid of his agrarian context and agrarian values and (b) there is a significant contrast in Berry's way of thinking with most of the experts, whereas a few are beginning to see as he sees. By placing Berry and these leading thinkers side-by-side, the reader has a chance to contemplate his/her own values in the leadership conversation. Suggestions were given on the potential of the script for performance use.

Finally, I sought application of Berry's ideas to the leadership task (chapter 7). After illustrating how Berry himself applies the definitions of leadership in Burns, Rost,
and Bennis, I introduced Bolman and Deal's (2003) well-known book *Reframing Organizations*. Already a useful book, I adapted their metaphors with metaphors I gleaned from Berry's writings, bringing a cohesive agrarian connection. I then suggested the value of using Berry's integral idea of the interlocking systems of reality as a way to challenge leaders to manage by walking further into authentic awareness of all the consequences of their work. A version of Berry's values served as a suggested reorientation of organizational purpose and to introduce virtuous practice and character as an appropriate response from leaders who buy in to these values. Kimberly Smith (2003) sees in Berry's writings a "vision of a graceful life" that "brings the virtues together and orders them. Grace therefore serves as a moral ideal for individuals, a vision of the good life based on the idea of the good farmer but," she adds, "to which even nonfarmers may aspire" (p. 162).

**Methods**

This has been exploratory research in a qualitative vein which "is useful when the researcher does not know the important variables to examine" and in that "the topic is new" (Creswell, 2003, p. 22). Much of what is here was discovered on the go as I worked through the writings of Wendell Berry. As it became clear that he had a concern for values, it became my focus to take a closer look at his value-set.

My interest in sociology led to the discovery of and resonance with C. Wright Mills's *The Sociological Imagination* (1959). Though I did not use Mills's method, per se, I sought to understand its use and to detect its use in others. He, of course, applies it to his own work and to his sociological colleagues, calling them to an approach to study that is neither as idealized as Parsonian "Grand Theory" nor so abstracted as the
miniscule studies of the empiricists. I found his method for doing sociology as a important way of looking at the world in general and an important skill for leaders in specific. My goal was to describe that method as seen through the agrarian thinking of Wendell Berry.

As part of looking at Berry sociologically, I have taken validation from an area known as the sociology of literature. Though not found in standard textbooks or discussed by prominent sociologists, the legitimacy of this approach appears to be intact. It has at least two major approaches and its methodology has not been standardized. This lack of clarity in the field has given me the freedom to apply a sociological lens to the extensive literature of Wendell Berry, his values, and the connection to leadership. I have looked to understand how he understands the social system and to suggest ways that his insights might be applied to the social role of the leader.

Toward the development of a theoretical answer to my research question, I have utilized an adapted case study approach, Wendell Berry’s writings providing case documents for my primary analysis. Merriam (1998) says that case data are “used to develop conceptual categories or to illustrate, support, or challenge theoretical assumptions held prior to the data gathering” (p. 38). Berry’s writings were not the only data, however. His work was put up against the massive literature on leadership and business in a challenge to the theoretical assumptions found there.

My theoretical exploration has taken me into multi-disciplinary terrain. I have worked in the fields of literature, sociology, anthropology, psychology, leadership, business, organizational studies, agriculture, ecology, philosophy, language, and, to a smaller extent, theatre arts. These areas and sub-disciplines within them (such as
environmental sociology and virtue ethics) have been probed and integrated in these pages. This has required a method that relies upon intuitive reading combined with good record keeping in order to identify, consider, and confirm cross-disciplinary connections. In this study, it would be inappropriate to stay locked in to one subject since the subject of this dissertation writes and thinks from an interdisciplinary framework.

Discussion

This dissertation focuses on how Wendell Berry's values and his sociological imagination can serve the task of good leadership in the postmodern world. I have tried to show that Berry's way of viewing and assessing the social context is consistent with C. Wright Mills's idea of the sociological imagination, which he advances beyond Mills due to his agricultural orientation. For the most part, the values that Berry comes to are not on the radar screen of those in business leadership. In order to do better by doing good (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004), some of these leaders may accept the value of corporate social responsibility (Crook, 2005), but only rarely will they see much (if any) obligation to nature, farmlands, and agricultural communities. I have suggested that Berry's values and the virtues that emerge from them will take leaders beyond merely being considered good in the sense of organizational effectiveness. Through practices that develop the leader's personal character and shape the organization's relational, cultural, structural, political and systemic arenas, the leader will be seen as morally good, having led with awareness and concern for the health of the whole socio-ecological system (a system of interlocking systems) inhabited by all living things both human and non-human.

We live in a time when such conversations are being welcomed. In a recent article, Warren G. Bennis and James O'Toole (2005) critique the majority of business
schools that are built on the scientific model and give far too much weight to quantitative study. They say,

In business research . . . the things routinely ignored by academics on the ground that they cannot be measured—most human factors and all matters relating to judgment, ethics, and morality—are exactly what makes the difference between good business decisions and bad ones. (p. 100)

They cite (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005) Thomas Lindsay, former provost at the University of Dallas, who “estimates that, before the recent scandals, business students spent ‘95% of their time learning to calculate with a view to maximizing wealth. Just 5% of their time . . . is spent developing their moral capacities’” (p. 104). Lindsay aligns himself with Aristotle in believing that a moral education is a multidisciplinary endeavor.

The metaphors for leadership are being reconsidered (Kelly, 1993; Wheatley, 1999) and methods for educating leaders are shifting (Augier & Teece, 2005), and our very image of leadership is moving from “the powerful” to “the humble” (J. Collins, 2001). Furthermore, there is an awakening to the need for business and her leaders to be concerned about all things ecological (Hawken, 1994; Hawken et al., 1999).

It is into this postmodern context that Berry’s moral ideology can make an important contribution to business ethics. This means that those who study leadership will need to do what Mills (1959) and Gouldner (1964) called their fellow sociologists to do almost 50 years ago: abandon the doctrine of value-free sociology. As Gouldner notes,

The image of a value-free sociology is more than a neat intellectual theorem demanded as a sacrifice to the “objectivity” of reason; it is, also, a felt conception of a role and a set of more or less shared sentiments as to how sociologists should live. (p. 197)
The same could be said of those studying organizations and business leadership. Up until recently, scholars have avoided placing a moral evaluation on "leadership": Hitler and Churchill were both, *ahem*, "good" leaders. But it is now time to bring moral values into our conversations about leadership (Kellerman, 2004). Bennis (2001) is honest about his own uneasiness as he wonders about his value-free assessment of a morally questionable "Great Group" (Bennis & Biederman, 1997). Bennis says (2001), "I'm not quite sure how to pose the question any more than I can get my nervous conceptual arms around it" (p. 10). Postmodern relativism alongside the postmodern passion for authenticity makes this discussion of moral values, to say the least, tricky.

From what philosophical position does Berry enter the conversation? It has been noted that "Wendell Berry has given us a valuable critique of modernity" (Sr. Macrina, 1991). Am I suggesting that *Berry* is "postmodern"? Rosenau (1992) speaks of skeptical post-modernism which, she says, offers "a pessimistic, negative, gloomy assessment" (p. 15). Furthermore, she says, it argues "that the post-modern age is one of fragmentation, disintegration, malaise, meaninglessness, a vagueness or even absence of moral parameters and societal chaos" (p. 15). That opinion sounds like Berry's. She later says, "Although . . . the affirmatives, agree with the skeptical postmodernists' critique of modernity; they have a more hopeful, optimistic view of the post-modern age" (p. 15). On this definition, Berry may be an affirmative postmodernist. *But then* Rosenau says, "Most affirmatives seek a philosophical and ontological intellectual practice that is nondogmatic, tentative, and nonideological" (p. 16). Well, maybe Berry is not postmodern. But then Rosenau follows with:

These post-modernists do not, however, shy away from affirming an ethic, making normative choices, and striving to build issue-specific political coalitions. Many
affirmatives argue that certain value choices are superior to others, a line of reasoning that would incur the disapproval of the skeptical post-modernists. (p. 16)

Whatever label he deserves, Berry makes a unique contribution to the morality conversations within the postmodern era. For example, Berry laments our culture’s romance with “progress” and our unbridled enthusiasm for technological advances. He finds the language in which these ideas are communicated to be deceptive and destructive. He has, however, a commitment to a clear, simple, and honest communication, which sets him apart from the language games played by many postmodern writers! (See for example, Derrida, 1980, 1998.)

What is more, he is somewhat of a foundationalist in that his morality is rooted in the earth and it is from this place that he has developed his own grand narrative: health for each local place and local community built on the moral values of agrarianism. Lyotard (1993) says that postmodernism is “incredulity toward metanarratives” (p. 72). This may imply that having a grand/metanarrative is quite unpostmodern and that Berry, therefore, is unpostmodern. Besides, who could really argue with the importance of a globally applied land ethic for our own generation’s health, as well as for the health of generations beyond our own? Bill Shaw (2001) says:

“Land” is the embodiment of intrinsic rather than merely instrumental value. Instrumentally, land is a vessel for the production of food and other natural resources. Intrinsically, it is valuable in itself, and if land was more widely conceptualized intrinsically, mention of the word land would be reason enough to preserve its integrity and natural capacity.

Just as it is often said that “virtue is its own reward,” and one need look no further for a reason for being virtuous, so it may be that efforts toward land preservation need no further reason to justify themselves. (p. 53; see also Hawken, 1994, chapter 2)

Berry, in the way Shaw’s comments illustrate, perceives an agrarian duty that has utilitarian consequences based on the instrumentality of land as the source of food.
Though Kant "rejected nature as a source of value" (Daston & Vidal, 2004, p. 23), Berry echoes the Kantian spirit in his belief that everyone should share the categorical imperative of healthy land and land-based communities. (It might be noted here that the industrial crowd has its own grand story/categorical imperative of profit maximization.)

Furthermore, Berry fits the postmodern bill as one who respects "the other," values diversity, and puts priority on local (as opposed to global) points-of-view. In this, the postmodern mind will resonate with Berry's (tolerance) worldview. However, Berry is not uncritically tolerant. He says,

If I merely tolerate my neighbors on the assumption that all of us are equal, that means I can take no interest in the question of which ones of us are right and which ones are wrong; it means that I am denying the community the use of my intelligence and judgment; it means that I am not prepared to defer to those whose abilities are superior to mine, or to help those whose condition is worse, it means that I can be as self-centered as I please. (Berry, 1993, p. 173)

In addition to being something of a postmodern, Berry may also be thought of as Aristotelean, which my earlier discussion of virtue ethics illustrates. Consider the similarities between Berry and Aristotle from Shaw's (1995) reflections:

Virtues in Aristotle's ethic were understood to be stable dispositions or propensities to excel in one's personal role or calling and to act appropriately in the face of tough choices. An individual identified personal well-being with the good of the group, and the good of the group, in turn, was identified with the good of the whole. It was as if the individual was enveloped by, and was an integral part of, ever-widening concentric circles (large and larger groups or communities). The alienation of "self" and "other" was thus overcome by a sense of shared values and ideals. (¶ 58)

I have written based on the hope that it is possible for leaders—in their personal role and calling—to make choices that reflect the virtues and the values of the agrarian standard.

As Aristotle instructs in his Nicomachaen Ethics and as Berry has said, change in heart, or of stated values, is not enough. As I have said, neither man is hopeful of such virtuousness in what we know as the modern corporation. Truly, a value-driven leader
who is being further transformed into a virtuous leader will be faced with many
challenges. For example, a virtuous leader in an exploitive industry is an oxymoron. In
fact, Berry may say of whole industries what Ivan Illich (1979) said of schools: *They
need to be disestablished.* (Yet in reading about some of the changes Shell Oil is making,
one could easily wonder if Berry is serving them as a consultant. See Burke, Harte,
Scarlett, & Shireman, 2001, pp. 21-23.)

But I write to apply Berry's values because they inform and guide leaders who
will aim to start, and even transform, existing organizations. Mills says,

Where there are moral men in immoral institutions, you seek to improve the
institutions. When there are immoral men in moral institutions, you kick the rascals
out. When you are confronted by immoral men in immoral institutions, you follow
Jefferson's advice and revolt. If you are fortunate enough to encounter moral men in
moral institutions, you seek to maintain them as a standard for other areas of your
public life. (as cited in Horowitz, n.d., p. 337)

Mills speaks of "men of conscience" saying "they would stand up to corrupting
institutions and thus become the pivots around which these institutions could be
redirected. But they could not do that if they were not sustained by a morally oriented
movement" (as cited in Horowitz, n.d., p. 338). People and leaders becoming more moral
will lead to moral organizations and a moral society. In an interview with Jordan Fisher-
Smith, Berry says:

**Berry:** . . . To submit to the job of making perfect a relationship or place or
another person means that you must submit to correction yourself. You must
submit to the agony of being made perfect yourself, and that’s terrifying and
extremely difficult. It means you have to face failure over and over again - to
realize that you never will really succeed, but this is the necessary work of the
world.

**Fisher-Smith:** Which is?

**Berry:** To take what we’ve got and make it better. (¶ 44-46)
A Better Kind of Leader

Joseph Rost (1991) does not talk about leaders, per se. He seeks to define "leadership." Al Gini offers a helpful adaptation of Rost's definition (p. 102), saying "Leadership is a power- and value-laden relationship between leaders and followers/constituents who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes and goals" (¶ 22). That is a helpful start, but I agree with Joanne Ciulla who says, "The ultimate point of studying leadership is, 'What is good leadership?'" (¶ 39). She says, furthermore,

Research and teaching in areas like business ethics and leadership ethics should aim not only at making business people and leaders more ethical, but at reconceptualizing the way that we think about the theory and practice of business and leadership. (1995, ¶ 19)

By allowing Wendell Berry to serve as a fresh voice in a context that is not explicitly his, this is just what I have attempted in this document. My conclusions do not form a new definition for leadership. I am content with what Gini has added to Rost in this regard. The original research question was: In what ways do the writings of Wendell Berry, reflecting his sociological imagination, address and advance leadership theory with specific regard for the issue of agrarian values? My conclusions come together in a series of suggestions for defining good leadership:

1. A good leader is more committed to being virtuous than to being profitable.

2. A good leader is one who can "get it right," has "foresight," and has the ability to see society through the grid of the sociological imagination.

3. A good leader's understanding of the economy is shaped primarily by the ideas of health and stewardship, not profit and exploitation.
4. A good leader is willing to rethink his/her values with a concern for a sustainable world (in both the human and non-human senses) to the seventh generation and beyond.

5. A good leader is willing to manage with care and honesty by walking further into the places, communities, and sources of both nutrition and materials.

6. A good leader sees as a central element of the job the task of equipping workers to see the social milieu for what it is, to empower them for independent and interdependent work, and to eagerly guide them in the way of moral virtue.

On Berry's behalf, I have invited leaders to the liminal space of his agrarian world. As an anthropologist working among tribal peoples, Victor Turner (1969) describes young men who undergo rites of passage. During this time and in this place, they are marginalized from normal society to be later reunited with the group with new rights and obligations. “Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremony” (p. 95). My hope is that this dissertation provides for leaders—as Berry’s written corpus has provided for me—a place of disorientation. I do not hope that they would be left confused and hopeless, but able to “return to structure revitalized” (p. 129) having clarified their values for health, land, and moral virtue.

**Recommendations for Further Study**

The research question that I suggested would inform this project is this: In what ways do the writings of Wendell Berry, reflecting his sociological imagination, address and advance leadership theory with specific regard for the issue of agrarian values? In these pages, leadership theory has been advanced in that:
1. A solid attempt to connect agrarian values to corporate leadership has not been made up to this point.

2. While the matter of virtues, virtue ethics, and even environmental virtue ethics has been aligned with leadership, until now the connection linking virtues and an agrarian value-set in particular has not been made.

3. Tying the sociological imagination to the task of good leadership does not exist in the literature, particular in viewing that ability through the agrarian perspective of someone such as Wendell Berry.

4. Practical guidelines to leaders from the foundation of agrarian values are a further advance in leadership studies.

5. The themes of this study have attempted to provide a case for rethinking the industrial paradigm of business in general and, more likely, for the work of leaders who direct a particular business endeavor.

But further recommendations for study are primed for attention within the content of this research:

1. Further analysis of Wendell Berry’s many particular themes is crying to me, as it must to many of Berry’s readers. To further describe the ideas of the home economy, the cultural role of the poet, the practicalities behind crafting local economies, the relationship of the Kingdom of God to the Great Economy, and principles of indigeneity are among those that I have taken note of for additional study.

2. Some further qualitative and quantitative analysis of leaders already inclined to agrarian values would teach us more about how such values are being used in the practice of good leadership.
3. I think that a Readers Theatre, worked out even more artistically than the one here and then performed, would be a good teaching tool. It could be used, perhaps, in the context of a larger “Agrarian Values and Good Leadership” course or training workshop.

4. There would be research usefulness based on (a) my metaphorical recommendations offered as an adaptation of Bolman and Deal’s (2003) Four Frame analysis, (b) the Managing by Walking Further paradigm (and the awareness of those in corporate leadership of the interlocking systems of reality), and (c) the themes suggested around the particular value set of sustainability, fidelity, propriety, humility, and integrity.

5. An attempt to find and study leaders who have taken these kinds of values and virtues and sought either to start a business or bring change to an existing organization would be rich qualitative studies.

6. I would like to see work done in taking Mills’s sociological imagination and further integrating it with agrarian concerns. A question to be considered, alongside the integration, is: What would Mills think? Mills was like Berry in his bemoaning the consumer culture that had emerged and in his alarm at what he called “the power elite.” He also understood the emergence of the agri-business corporations and the decline of family farmers. But agrarianism as a value-set was not on his radar.

7. I would like to further understand the similarities and differences between C. Wright Mills and Wendell Berry. The more acquainted I become with them both, the more I see strong similarities, as well as notable differences that would be helpful in understanding how writers and teachers influence their readers and students.

8. I think that interviewing Wendell Berry to glean his responses,
resonances, and correctives to what is presented here would be most interesting and
useful.

Final Thought

In *Given* (2005), Wendell Berry's first book of poetry in 10 years, he offers a

poem called "The Leader":

Head like a big
watermelon,
frequently thumped
and still not ripe.

(p. 25).

It is my hope that the words on these passages would come together as sun, rain,
and even compost in hopes of being a small contribution to the ripening work that needs
to occur in the lives of our business leaders. My "farmer's prayer" is that there would be
a ripening of health, goodness, and reproductive potential in their heads, as well as in
their hearts and hands.
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